



THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR LEARNS



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THE NEW TESTAMENT
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THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR LEARNERS



PALESTINE



THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR LEARNERS

BY

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PALESTINE

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THE NARRATIVES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

PREPARED BY DR. I. HOONYKAAS

INTRODUCTION.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF JESUS AND THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

I.

NINETEEN hundred years ago the whole civilized world known to the ancients bowed beneath the sceptre of the Emperor of Rome. Everywhere from Britain to Æthiopia the Roman eagles had marked the track of victory. The Atlantic Ocean and the African desert had interposed impassable natural barriers to the West and South; the Rhine and Danube formed a northern frontier against the Barbarians. In the East alone the invincible legions had been baffled, for the Parthian or new Persian monarchy contested with varying fortune of war the possession of the district of the Euphrates, and the wandering tribes of north-western Arabia were troublesome neighbors whom it was easy to defeat but impossible to subdue. For this reason Syria and Phœnicia were generally occupied by a very considerable military force.

The whole of this enormous area was divided into *provinces* (conquered territories) of Rome, and was ruled by governors. The only exception was furnished by Middle and Southern Italy; for about a century before the commencement of our era the inhabitants of these districts, sword in hand, had extorted from the citizens of Rome the concession of equal rights, and now stood under the immediate government of the Roman Senate. But even in the East there were some few people who were still dignified with the name of *allies*, and allowed to retain their own princes as vassals of Rome. These people, though bound to pay tribute and serve in the army, still preserved the shadow of independence. Originally the title of Roman citizen was only allowed to a foreigner

as a reward for some signal service, but eventually it was granted to any one who paid a fixed sum of money. The title was greatly coveted, for it gave those who bore it the privilege of appeal from the jurisdiction of the local governors to the imperial court at Rome.

With regard to language the gigantic empire was split into two great sections. Latin prevailed in the West; but in the East, ever since the times of Alexander the Great, Greek had been the universal language.

Octavianus, better known under the name of Augustus, heir to the great Julius Caesar, was the first to ascend the imperial throne, which he did after a sanguinary civil war (reigned 29 B.C. to 14 A.D.). And now, for the first time for centuries, there was peace; and the doors of the temple of Janus at Rome, which always stood open in time of war, were closed. Under Augustus the provinces were divided into two classes. To those which had neither internal commotions nor hostile invasions to fear governors were appointed yearly by the Senate; but those which were threatened by tumult or war were governed by nominees of the Emperor. These imperial provinces were for the most part situated on the frontier, and in them the five-and-twenty legions of the empire were quartered. In fact their governors were military commanders, each of them supported by a general overseer of the taxation. Important sub-districts, such as Palestine, were sometimes placed under the immediate control of deputy-governors, who combined the administration of the military, the judicial, and the financial affairs of their respective districts.

The Roman supremacy weighed like lead upon the subject peoples. So far from respecting their independence the governors aimed rather at extinguishing all national peculiarities. But the worst abuse was the systematic draining of the provinces by the contractors of taxes, who practised the most shameless extortion with impunity. On the other hand, the widest toleration of the various religions was practised by Rome. The governors were instructed to respect the religious convictions of the peoples. Thus, for example, the military standards to which the Caesar's image was affixed had never been carried into Jerusalem before the time of Pilate, out of regard to the Jewish horror of image-worship. The Roman magistrates in many of the conquered districts took part officially in the public worship of their respective territories; and Augustus even went so far as to assign a portion of the

imperial revenues drawn from Palestine to the maintenance of the daily sacrifice in the temple on Mount Zion. Generally speaking, then, the Romans were far from desiring to force the worship of their own gods upon all their allies or subjects. But there was one exception to this rule. It was required, throughout the whole empire, that divine honors should be paid to the Emperor ; and the demand involved the Jews, and the Christians after them, in grievous perplexities.

The Romans themselves were forbidden by law to go over to a foreign religion ; but the regulation was seldom enforced. Indeed, the religious condition of the ancient world made it impossible to carry it out ; for faith in the national deities was tottering to its fall among Romans and Greeks alike. In fact, it had out-lived itself ; and philosophy had powerfully contributed to its overthrow. A deep dissatisfaction made the want of something better keenly felt, and an ever stronger yearning after a purer conception of the nature and the will of the Deity threw many a one into the arms of Judaism, just as it afterwards prepared the way for Christianity.

II.

THE civil war between the brothers Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, sons of the Maccabæan prince Alexander Jannæus, had brought the Romans under Pompey into Judæa (64 B.C.) ; and once established there as rulers, they obstinately maintained their footing. It was through their favor and by the force of their arms that the Idumæan Herod, son of Antipater, the adviser of Hyrcanus, secured the Jewish throne (from 37 to 4 B.C.). He threw down the temple of Zerubbabel, and raised a new and magnificent structure in its place. The building of this temple occupied eight years, and the cost was enormous. Herod was an energetic and magnificent ruler, but a thorough despot. His suspicious character and unnatural cruelty merited the burning hatred with which he was regarded by his subjects. This aversion was so intense that on his death the Jews sent a special embassy to Rome, praying the Emperor not to impose upon them a prince of the house of Herod, but rather to allow them to follow their own laws and customs, under the supervision of the governor of Syria. But their petition was rejected, and Augustus, giving effect to the will of Herod, divided the country among that monarch's sons. Archelaus received Idumæa, Judæa, and Sa-

maria ; Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa ; and Philip obtained the northern regions east of the Jordan. After a reign of nine years Archelaus was accused at Rome, by his own subjects, of gross misdeeds, was deposed by the Emperor, and banished to Vienna (in Gaul), A.D. 6. His territory was added to the province of Syria, and came under the jurisdiction of the Roman governors who had their seat at Cæsarea, on the sea coast. The fifth of these governors, Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26–37) is the one best known to us. On the death of Philip, in A.D. 34, his district also was incorporated with Syria, and some years afterwards, in A.D. 39, Herod Antipas was deposed by the Romans and banished to Lyons.

Meanwhile, however, a grandson of Herod the Great, by another line, had obtained the title of King, through the favor of the Emperor, and had had the former territory of Philip assigned to him (A.D. 37). Galilee and Peræa were now (A.D. 39) added to his domain ; and finally Judæa, Idumæa, and Samaria were placed under him, — so that the whole land of the Jews was once more united (A.D. 41–44) under a prince of its own, Herod Agrippa I. He succeeded in gaining the affection of his people by his strict regard to religious observances, but he died after a very short reign. His son, Agrippa II., did not succeed him, but was afterwards, in A.D. 53, appointed to the general supervision of the temple, with the right of nominating the high priest. Henceforth, all Palestine was a Roman Province, and as there had been seven governors before Agrippa I. so there were seven after him. The fourth and fifth of these, Claudius Felix (A.D. 52–61), and Porcius Festus (A.D. 61–63) are mentioned in the New Testament. Under the seventh, Gessius Florus, that revolt against Rome burst out which ended in the fall of the Jewish state and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (A.D. 66–70).

The cruelty and extortion, the caprice and incompetence of Florus had doubtless hastened this outburst ; but, independently of all this, it might have been long foreseen. For a century past an increasing fermentation had been observable among the Jews. It had given rise as early as the times of Herod the Great to repeated tumults, and when, at the deposition of Archelaus, the Roman governor held a census in the new province, certain wild spirits had unfurled the banner of revolt against Rome. These “zealots” as they were called, for God and the fatherland, gradually formed a party in Israel, and grew more numerous and more

fanatical year by year, till at last they utterly destroyed the influence of the party of order and submission, and carried away the whole people with them.

Let us now glance at the internal organization and condition of the people. The highest official position was that of the high priest; but Herod the Great had set the example of deposing and appointing the high priest by royal authority, and had conferred the dignity upon a family of priests, who though Jews were not natives of Palestine: so the lustre of the office had greatly declined. The post was passed backwards and forwards between a few families, and not many of the high priests remained in office much above a year. Their ambition was then satisfied, and they willingly resigned the honor in favor of some successor, especially if he were a brother or other near relative. As a rule they secured but little personal respect from the people. The high priest was the president of the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, a body which pronounced judgment without appeal, as the supreme Jewish authority both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs. Its decisions were even held binding by the Jews residing in foreign countries. But it had no power to carry out the sentence of death without the consent of the Roman governor. There were also judges in every city in Palestine, and each synagogue had its council of elders, who exercised certain judicial powers.

Israel's great misfortune was want of unanimity. Up to the last moment of its existence the nation was torn asunder by bitter religious and political disputes. The Pharisees and Sadducees in particular were violently opposed to one another. The Sadducees were the aristocratical party, composed of the families from which the high priests were drawn, together with their adherents and certain other distinguished families. They laid great stress upon the privileges of the priests and upon the dignity and the sanctity of the order; they sedulously cultivated the friendship of their rulers, including the Romans, and insisted upon submission to authority and the maintenance of order. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were the national party. Filled with a lofty sense of Israel's pre-eminence above other nations, and the privileges it might claim as the people of God, they scrupulously avoided all intercourse with the heathen, endeavored to develop the religion of the Law in accordance with the wants of the age, and maintained the sanctity of all Israelites as members of the priestly nation. Narrow-minded, scrupulous, and formal, they were neverthe-

less inspired with untiring zeal in the service of Yahweh, with unreserved devotion to his glory, and with inextinguishable hope in the future of his people. As a rule, the love and honor in which the people held them equalled the indifference or even dislike with which they regarded the Sadducees. But the Sadducees, on the other hand, held the reins of authority, though the Pharisees could make their influence felt in the Sanhedrim, to which a certain number of members were appointed from the order of the Scribes. These Scribes received their education at the University or Colleges of Jerusalem, made the study of the Law the task of their lives, and then interpreted and applied it in the synagogues. For the most part they adopted the principles of the Pharisees with heart and soul. The Zealots, too, belonged originally to the Pharisaic school; but while the majority of the party were opposed to violence, the Zealots were determined agitators, and were finally the cause of Israel's fall, after a hopeless struggle.

Lastly, the Essenes must be added to the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were not simply a school or party, however, but a special sect which had risen out of Pharisaism. They may be best described as an order of Jewish monks. Their numbers are estimated at four thousand. Still more strict and scrupulous than any of the other Jews, they were not content with the ordinary observance of the Law, and so withdrew themselves from all public life in nervous fear of contamination, and formed a little society by themselves.

The mass of the people remained as a rule unshaken in their fidelity to their religion, scrupulous in the observance of the Law, and zealous in attending the synagogue and, at the high feasts, the temple. They were impressed with a sense of their own dignity, which was only too apt to degenerate into narrow-minded national pride and hatred of the foreigner or heathen. They bore the yoke of Rome uneasily, and entertained an unmeasured contempt and aversion for the Samaritans. They were in constant hope of being delivered by their God from the miseries they now endured; and this "Messianic expectation," which filled so many bosoms, sometimes rose to the glow of inspiration, or burst into a flame of consuming passion. Judæa, and especially Jerusalem, was the seat of Jewish orthodoxy; that is to say, of the most fanatical enthusiasm for the strict observance of the Law and Levitical "cleanness." Galilee, the most beautiful portion of the country, was surrounded by heathens

and inhabited by a half-Jewish, half-heathen population. The Galilæans were as full of religious zeal as the men of Judæa themselves, and indeed were still more easily roused to action by the cry “for God and for Israel!” But they were nevertheless considered more or less “unclean.” There was, moreover, a tolerably large class of persons who either did not observe the Law with sufficient strictness, or were too free in their intercourse with the heathen. They were known as “the peoples of the land,” and were looked down upon as unclean. So, too, we meet with a class described as “sinners,” who were excluded from the civil and ecclesiastical communion of the Jews. The sentence of excommunication had been pronounced upon them by the synagogue for some grave moral or religious offence. To the same class belonged the tax-collectors or “publicans,” who were branded as hirelings of the Roman conquerors and traitors to their fatherland and their religion, and were hated and cursed by their countrymen.

Ever since Shalmaneser and Nebuchadrezzar had carried away the Israelites into captivity, and still more since the successors of Alexander the Great had founded their kingdoms, a large proportion of the Jewish nation had been scattered all over the ancient world, and was called “Israel in the Dispersion.” In Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy, but still more in Babylonia and Egypt, considerable communities of Jews were established. They retained their national and religious allegiance, formed little societies by themselves, studied the Law in their synagogues, kept up an intimate connection with their true fatherland, and at the Passover especially streamed by thousands to the temple. In Alexandria the Jews rose to a most distinguished position, and the more cultivated among them attempted to effect a union between the religion of Yahweh and the Greek philosophy and culture. It was there that the Old Testament was translated into Greek, and so made accessible to strangers. There, too, a new Jewish literature sprang up, and a curious school of Jewish philosophy flourished. The Jews were favored by the authorities almost everywhere, and, though they were hated by the heathen populace, they made numerous converts to their religion. These converts were known as “Proselytes.”

Before long Israel was to yield to the heathen world the religious privilege of which it was so proud,—the possession of the purest knowledge of God’s nature and his will.

III.

SUCH was the scene upon which Jesus and his Apostles appeared.

Jesus — whom three or four hundred millions of disciples so justly honor as the greatest of all who have ever lived on earth — was born and bred in Nazareth, a secluded mountain village in Galilee. His parents were called Joseph and Mary, and belonged to the humbler class of citizens. They had a large family; but none of its members except James, and perhaps Judas, ever gained a place of distinction among the followers of Jesus. But little is known of the youth of Jesus, nor can we say with certainty how old he was when he entered upon public life.

But we do know the occasion of his leaving the narrow circle in which he lived. In the wilderness of Judah, not far from the Jordan, a prophet of the name of John had risen. The fact was remarkable enough in itself, for no prophet had appeared for four or five centuries past, and the gift of prophecy seemed to have vanished altogether. But the striking character of John himself, his severe mode of life, somewhat analogous to that of the Essenes, and still more the subject-matter of his preaching, all combined to make him the object, for a time at least, of universal attention. He preached that the deliverance was near at hand, that God was about to fulfil the hope of former generations, the promises of ancient oracles, and that the Messianic kingdom would be soon established. He called upon his countrymen to amend their lives, and so to hasten the dawn of this glorious day, and, above all, to escape the fearful judgment which God would bring upon all sinners. He collected a band of disciples round him, and, if any one listened to his preaching and gave evidence of true repentance, he baptized him in the Jordan. By means of this rite, the symbol of purity, he intended to proceed at once to the practical measure of inaugurating the Messianic kingdom, by forming a community of its future subjects.

The fame of John has found its way to Nazareth; and Jesus, whose soul burns for the coming of the kingdom of God, lays down his work, bids farewell to his family, and sets out from Nazareth towards the spot where John is preaching. He listens to him, is baptized by him, and remains some time with him.

But the career of John is brought to a sudden close. Herod Antipas has flung him into the dungeon whence he is never to come out alive. Is there no one to take up the task he has been compelled to leave unfinished, and prepare Israel for the approaching Messianic kingdom? Yes. The violent interruption of the work of John was the signal for Jesus to come forward. The subject-matter of his preaching was at first almost identical with that of his predecessor. But, as his character was widely different from John's, so he took up his task in quite another spirit, and cherished a far more exalted and spiritual conception of the Messianic kingdom. He did not withdraw into the desert, but returned to Galilee, mingled in the busy life of the people, preached when and where he could find the opportunity, and turned more especially to the outcasts of Jewish society. He looked upon it as his special task to teach the despised "peoples of the land" something of God and the way to serve him, and to raise the publicans and sinners out of their moral wretchedness. If he could succeed in this, the kingdom of God would no longer be delayed.

He established himself at Capernaum, a busy place by the sea of Galilee, on the great commercial road to Syria; for he knew that he would not find a ready hearing in his native place. When he did preach there, some time afterwards, his fellow-townsmen, who had never noticed any thing that marked him off from others, could not bring themselves to think of him as a prophet, and even his own family failed to understand him. Jesus let nothing discourage him, but went about through the different towns and villages of Galilee preaching of the kingdom of God, generally in figurative language, and in parables or stories; bearing witness to God's infinite and eternal love, and the holiness that he requires from his children; seeking out the lost with a patience that was never weary. The impression he produced was deep, especially when he had cured a certain number of persons subject to nervous diseases, whose sickness was attributed to evil spirits supposed to dwell in them. A host of disciples, some of them women, gathered round him, and wherever he went the people thronged to hear him. He chose twelve of his followers as his constant companions, to receive a more special training, and to be his trusted friends. He intended eventually to send them out to publish everywhere the approaching establishment of the kingdom of God.

How long he worked in Galilee is uncertain. The term

of his preaching is usually estimated at three years, but without sufficient reason. Others think that it only lasted a little more than a year (A.D. 34-35), and there is much to be said in support of this opinion. But however long or short his ministry may have been, he was unwearied in his labors. He never allowed himself a moment's rest, and, since the hours of the day left him no time of leisure, it was no rare thing for him to sacrifice the hours of sleep in order to recover from the distractions of the daytime, to think over his work and his surroundings, and to strengthen himself by prayer.

His attitude towards the religion of Israel requires special explanation. He did not reject it, but in the spirit of the great prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries he endeavored to develop its higher aspects. Outward ceremonies, precepts about the Sabbath, Levitical "cleanness," prohibitions of certain kinds of food and all such things, though regarded by his contemporaries as the very essence of religion, had little value in his eye. The moral requirements of the Law, on the other hand, he placed in the foreground, at the same time extending their application. Irreproachable conduct was not enough for him ; he required purity in the very dispositions of the heart, boundless love, mercy, humility, gentleness. He spoke of God as the Father in heaven, whose love embraces all and who desires that all should be saved. He rose above narrow national prejudices ; felt the priceless worth of every human soul, and had such deep, firm faith in human nature that he threw open the gates of salvation to every one, even the most abandoned.

Jesus could not preach and work in this way without coming into collision with those who were still guiding the religious life of his people along the line of development it had followed ever since the time of Ezra. Indeed, he must eventually come into collision with the Government itself. At first there was nothing to bring him into contact with the Sadducees, and they took no notice of him. The Essenes, too, had so completely shut themselves off from social life that he never met them after his appearance in public. On the other hand, he was thrown into the closest relations with the Pharisees from the beginning to the end of his public life. No doubt he had been taught, as part of his religious education, to esteem them highly ; it was from them, especially from the Galilæan Scribes, that he had gained in the synagogue his earliest knowledge of the Holy Scriptures of

his people ; and their zeal for the kingdom of God, their longing for its establishment, and their constant straining after "righteousness" had marked them out as his spiritual guides. And although he gradually became aware of much that offended him in their whole scheme of life, in their formality and worship of the letter, their self-righteousness and hardness towards the outcasts of church and society, yet at first he was willing to retain a favorable opinion of them. And they on their side regarded his appearance with interest, met him in no unfriendly spirit, and pointed out to him what they regarded as his mistakes. But gradually their relations became more strained. His intercourse with the unclean appeared to them a desecration of the service of Yahweh. Then they noticed again and again, and with ever-growing indignation, how careless he was in observing those precepts of the Law that referred to the outward life. At last, they saw clearly that he was attempting to establish the supremacy of a new principle of religious life, and that his preaching was coming into more and more direct conflict with the popular religion of his times. They now regarded him as a false prophet and a seducer of the people. And Jesus on his side came by this very opposition to understand the dark side of the Pharisaic teaching. He attacked it earnestly and emphatically, and strove to undermine its influence with the people. The conflict thus begun grew more and more violent as time went on, till at last the crash became inevitable.

IV.

MEANWHILE a change had taken place in the mind of Jesus himself, as his experiences of life deepened. His views as to himself, as to the fate that awaited him, and as to the future of his people had been greatly modified.

As for himself, he had never occupied a conspicuous place in his own thoughts. From first to last it was the work he had to do, and not his own person, that engaged his chief attention. At first he regarded himself simply as the herald of the kingdom of God, with the special mission of seeking out the "lost" of Israel. But he could not long remain unconscious that he had power to satisfy every religious want of the human heart. As he uttered the truths which his own soul had revealed to him, in communion with God, he

learned, with absolute certainty, that these were the highest and purest truths which man could find ; that they made plain to all, whether to the repentant sinner or to the steadfastly virtuous, the closeness of their relationship to God, the absolute reverence they owed to Him, and the natural union which should make them one with Him. Then he perceived that he must look for no other greater than himself, no Messiah whose forerunner he was, and who would take his stand above him ; and at last he made the heroic resolve that he would be the Messiah himself ; that he himself, cost what it might, would found that kingdom of God, the near approach of which he had announced.

But he never for a moment dreamed of ascending an earthly throne as the Messiah. Nothing could have been further from his thoughts. Long ago he had formed a far purer conception of the kingdom of God than that entertained by the ordinary Israelite, or even by John. He had seldom imitated John in hurling forth the threat of a fearful judgment to precede the founding of the kingdom, nor had he ever shared his people's dreams of a fearful vengeance to be inflicted upon the heathen oppressors. His profound and glorious conception was that of a society permeated by the purest principles of piety and virtue, gradually extending itself by its own intrinsic power, until at last definitely established in all its glory by a special act of God. So when he determined to call this Messianic kingdom into being himself, he had utterly renounced all those ideas of worldly splendor which his countrymen attached to the title of Messiah. He was more disposed to expect that his life would close in darkness ; and, in connection with the unfavorable reception which he now expected for his sublimest conceptions, he began to dwell upon the thought of divine chastisement and the fearful judgment of God far more than he had done before. He saw that he could not rely on the support of the masses ; that the opposition to his person and his principles grew more violent from day to day ; that his struggle with the Pharisees, the most powerful religious school of the times, was likely to prove fatal to himself. How little had he thought when first he began his work that it could ever come to this ! The heavens were then so clear above him ; but now they were overcast with dark and ever darker clouds. John had fallen a victim to his zeal for the kingdom of God, and in his fate Jesus now saw his own foreshadowed. As time went on this presentiment grew stronger and stronger. It cost him an effort to reconcile himself with

the thought that if he must lay down his life for the cause, then facing death was an essential part of the task that was laid upon him,—the inauguration of that kingdom of God of which he had been laying the foundations. The first period of his ministry is pervaded by a bright and joyous spirit, but henceforth his manner becomes more depressed, and a tone of sadness is cast over his preaching.

But this changed feeling was not wholly due to his altered expectations with reference to his own lot. He had altogether changed his views and anticipations with regard to Israel too. He loved his fatherland with all his heart. He prized the religious privileges of his people to the utmost. He had hoped, with the ancient prophets, that Israel would fulfil its calling, and would take the first place in God's kingdom. Though the heathen were also to be admitted, yet Israel would still be the guide and the light of the nations. But the violent opposition he had encountered on the one side, and the indifference he had met with on the other, had gradually taught him to know his people better; and now he saw that the close of Israel's glorious history would be far other than he once had thought. His people, as a people, would be shut out from the kingdom of God, and his country was rushing upon a miserable fate.

Jesus perceived that the decisive moment for his work, for his life, for his people, was at hand. He determined to prepare his disciples for the crisis. He had never yet proclaimed himself the Messiah, or given utterance to his dark forebodings. Once, when he was journeying through the northern portion of the country, unaccompanied except by his twelve more intimate companions, he asked them whom men thought he was, and whom they held him to be themselves. They answered that the mass of his followers still looked on him as the forerunner of the kingdom of God, but that as for themselves they reverenced him as the Messiah. Jesus accepted their testimony, but sternly forbade them to speak of it to any one. Soon afterwards he added that he was not destined to become a king, but rather to be put to death at Jerusalem. But his disciples simply could not understand or believe his words, though he afterwards repeated them several times still more distinctly.

Why did he go to Jerusalem if so fully conscious of the danger it involved? Because it was absolutely necessary for the cause he had at heart that he should do so, and, when duty called, anxiety for his personal safety must not hold

him back. His conduct had already roused such opposition that he could hardly limit his activity to so remote a place as Galilee without appearing to hold back on purpose. And besides, even there the opposition had become so strong that he could not well continue his work on the same footing as before. But his chief reason for going up to Jerusalem was that it was the focus of Israel's religious life, in which all great religious questions must be fought out. There and there only could he give his people the choice between his principles, his thoughts about God's character and will, his spiritual conception of the kingdom of God on the one hand, and the prevailing formalism represented by the Scribes on the other. His countrymen must then make their choice. He took advantage of the approaching Passover to execute his plan, for thousands of Jews, from every quarter of the world, would stream to the temple to celebrate that feast.

He accomplished this memorable journey to the capital by easy stages. He took his way through the district east of Jordan, crossed the ford at Jericho, spent the night in that city with a public functionary of the name of Zacchæus, passed on through Bethany, where he already had or now made faithful friends, and then crossed the Mount of Olives, and entered Jerusalem surrounded by a troop of Galilæans, who raised shouts of joy and triumph in his honor. He at once asserted his mission as a religious reformer, by driving out the dealers and the sacrificial beasts from the forecourt of the temple. He remained at Jerusalem for several days, preaching in one of the halls of the temple, and from time to time involved in controversial disputes. But at night he withdrew into a secret place of retreat, for he knew that his liberty and life were threatened. The authorities at Jerusalem, who regarded him as a false prophet, or dreaded the effect of his preaching upon public order, tried to get him into their power, but dared not lay hands on him by day for fear his followers should raise a tumult. But when he had eaten the Passover with his disciples on the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, one of them betrayed his place of refuge to the Sanhedrim. Under cover of the darkness he was seized, and was instantly tried and condemned as a blasphemer or heretic. The law prescribed stoning as the punishment of this offence, but the Roman governor, to whom application must be made for leave to carry out the sentence of death, took the affair into his own hands, and had Jesus crucified on the first day of the feast, upon a hill called Golgotha, outside the city walls.

By such a murderous issue was the richest of human lives brought to a hasty close. But Jesus had foreseen it and had not shrunk from it. It was needful to his cause. The future of his work was secured; the kingdom of God was founded. In this conviction Jesus breathed his last, undergoing a fearful martyrdom.

V.

THE execution of the Master was a crushing blow to the disciples. They had flattered themselves to the last with the belief that he whom they had reverenced as the Messiah would ascend the royal throne. And now that he was put to death as a malefactor, their faith for a moment gave way and they knew not what to think of him. They hastened back to Galilee, and there they slowly recovered from the shock. The Master's words came back to their minds, his image rose again before them, and under the influence of varied reminiscences and impressions the belief in his Messiahship revived, and the disciples were convinced that he could not have remained in the land of shadows, but must have risen from the dark realms of the dead and been received for a time into heaven. And now they thought that he would soon return from heaven to earth to assume the Messiah's crown, which had been refused to him before by the obstinate want of faith of the people, and especially of their leaders and governors. So they returned to Jerusalem, and there appeared as witnesses to Jesus and as heralds of the kingdom of God which was now so close at hand. Their preaching gained a hearing. The scattered followers of Jesus rallied round them, and their numbers were increased by the adhesion of new members, among whom a Levite of the island of Cyprus—Barnabas by name—is mentioned with special honor. A small community, distinguished by the brotherly love and mutual beneficence of its members, was established in the capital, and slowly but steadily increased.

The authorities left them for the most part unmolested. Neither ecclesiastical nor social institutions had any thing to fear from them. They made no disturbance, and what was more they remained absolutely true to the Jewish ideas of religious life, not only strictly abiding by the precepts of the Law, but distinguishing themselves by especial care and fidelity in the observances of religion and zeal in frequenting

the temple. They were not alone in looking forward with longing expectation to the speedy coming of the Messiah, and the only point in which they differed from their fellow-citizens was their conviction that that Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. They had evidently grasped but little of the spirit of the Master who had risen so high above the popular religion and assumed an attitude of such perfect freedom with regard to the observances of the Law.

But in the community of Jesus, mockingly called after him "the sect of the Nazarenes," there were some who had comprehended more of his true principles. The difference of opinion was developed by the accession of foreign Jews, who had settled at Jerusalem, and certain proselytes; for these classes were, as a rule, less narrow and prejudiced than the Palestinian Jews. A dispute in the bosom of the community which had hitherto been so harmonious brought seven of these more liberal Nazarenes into prominence. One of them, whose name was Stephen, proclaimed that when Jesus returned from heaven as the Messiah the external precepts of the Law would be rescinded, and the service of the temple superseded by a purer form of worship. No sooner had this heretical idea been broached, than the storm before which Jesus had fallen broke out with renewed fury. The Apostles and their adherents were spared, for their Judaism was irreproachable; but Stephen was stoned to death as a blasphemer, and his associates were persecuted and threatened with imprisonment, and had to save themselves by flight.

A young Pharisee, of the name of Paul, distinguished himself by his zeal in this persecution. But before long a mighty change was wrought in the soul of this man. He could not shake off the impression which these heretics had made on him. His doubts were confirmed by reflection and research; and since it was against his nature to do any thing by halves, he became a passionate adherent instead of a persecutor of the new faith. First of all he withdrew for a considerable time into Arabia, chiefly to clear his own mind. It was there that he formed his special conception of Jesus, the Messiah, and of his death on the cross as the inauguration of a new covenant between God and man, superseding the old covenant established on Mount Sinai. In this new covenant the Law was annulled, *faith* was the only condition of salvation, and the distinction between Jew and heathen was removed. On returning from Arabia, Paul appeared as

a teacher at Damascus, was persecuted there, and narrowly escaped with his life. It was not till three years after his conversion that he went up to Jerusalem to spend some days with Peter. After this he preached in Syria and Cilicia, making Antioch his headquarters.

Now at Antioch, the capital of Syria, a singular series of events had taken place. Certain members of the religious party represented by Stephen had taken refuge in this city, and had preached Jesus to the Greeks, that is, the heathens there. Such a thing had never been dreamed of hitherto by the followers of Jesus, for they believed that the Messiah and his kingdom belonged exclusively and entirely to the Jews. But the freer conceptions of these refugees enabled them to baptize, without scruple, any heathens who showed sufficient interest and faith in their preaching. Amid such surroundings Paul began the labors and disciplined the powers that were to achieve such vast results.

VI.

So quickly and spontaneously had a division into two schools risen among the disciples of Jesus! The points they had in common were the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and the hope that he would soon return to establish his kingdom. In other respects they differed widely. The older section was distinguished by unshaken fidelity to the Mosaic law and the Jewish religion as a whole, and a firm conviction that the Messianic kingdom was for Israel alone, and that all heathens who had not in whole or in part passed over to the Jewish religion would be excluded from it as "unclean." The headquarters of this party were at Jerusalem, and all the communities which had risen from time to time in the land of the Jews belonged to it. The persecution in which Stephen lost his life had driven away all dissentients, and a considerable number of Pharisees having joined the community, it was naturally confirmed in its strictly Jewish conceptions by the influence of its new adherents. The acknowledged leaders of this party were the Apostles, especially Peter and John; but even their influence was overshadowed by that of James, the brother of Jesus, who was not one of the twelve. He regulated his life on the strictest Pharisaic, or almost Essenic, principles, and accordingly stood high in the estimation of the Jews of Jerusalem.

The other school, whose pioneer was Stephen, and which was first established at Antioch under Barnabas, Paul, and other preachers, held that the external rites of Judaism were no longer binding; that heathens who turned from their mythological fancies to faith in the one true God and in Jesus as the ruler of God's kingdom were as well entitled to share the salvation to come as though they had been Jews. *Faith* was the one thing needful. This school extended principally among the Greeks, but the community at Antioch included other Jewish members besides its founders and guides, all of whom had relinquished their religious and national prejudices. These believers, who used the Greek word for Messiah, namely *Christ*, were called by their heathen fellow-citizens "Christians;" and though the name was originally given by a misunderstanding and as a term of reproach, it was destined to survive as the name of the new religion. At first the mass of these Christians knew little or nothing of the difference of religious principle which separated them from the believers in Palestine, for they kept up no regular intercourse with Jerusalem. But as soon as the two schools, which we shall call the *Jewish-Christian* and the *Heathen-Christian*, came into contact with each other they must inevitably clash.

The catastrophe was not long delayed, for certain rigid Jewish-Christians came from Judaea and greatly disturbed the congregation at Antioch by assuring them that when Christ returned from heaven he would not accept a heathen on the strength of his faith, unless he had been incorporated into Judaism by circumcision and conformity with the other requirements of the Law. In support of this opinion they appealed to the Apostles as the only accredited witnesses of what Jesus really intended; and their teaching caused much uneasiness and dissension in the community at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas did their best to counteract the disturbing influences of this teaching, but found themselves unable to prevent or heal the dissensions it caused, and were finally compelled to go up to Jerusalem to consult the Apostles. They took Titus with them, a converted but uncircumcised heathen. At Jerusalem they specially sought out the heads of the community,—James, Peter, and John. These three, though they could not quite admit that faith was all-sufficient in itself, and that the heathen need not submit to the Law or even to its main injunctions, yet recognized in the success of the Heathen-Christian mission a sign of God's approval, and

gave to Paul the right hand of fellowship. They determined not to oppose each other, but each to go his own way,—Paul and Barnabas to the Greeks, the Apostles of Jerusalem to the Jews. The only condition made was that a collection should be raised in the Heathen-Christian communities on behalf of the poor believers in Judæa.

Soon after Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch they received a visit from Peter. At first he associated in a perfectly free and brotherly spirit with the Heathen-Christians, but as soon as certain emissaries of James arrived at Antioch he suddenly reversed his line of conduct, separated himself from the believing heathens as though they were unclean, drew Barnabas and the other Jewish members of the congregation with him, and insisted on the Heathen-Christians submitting to the requirements of the Law. Paul, who stood altogether alone, opposed Peter and the Jewish fanaticism with all his might. He carried his point, but the gulf between the two parties was now wider than ever,—in fact impassable.

Not long afterwards Paul left Antioch, and, in company with Silas, Timotheus, and others, went on a missionary journey through Asia Minor. He visited and confirmed the communities already established, and founded many new ones, among which were some in the district of Galatia. After a time he passed over into Europe, and preached the Gospel at Philippi, Thessalonica, and elsewhere. He was almost everywhere persecuted and expelled, sometimes by heathens, but more frequently by Jews, till at last he settled for a time in Corinth, whence from time to time he visited various places in Achaia. After about a year and a half he was expelled from Corinth, and passed over to Ephesus, where he remained a considerable time, constantly making excursions through Asia Minor and to Macedonia and to Greece. He endured his manifold toils and difficulties, dangers and sufferings, with a zeal that nothing could daunt, and an unexampled energy. But his bitterest trial was the opposition he had to encounter from Jewish-Christians who came out from Judæa to stir up his heathen converts against him, and compel them to submit to the ordinances of the Law. They refused to recognize Paul as an Apostle, denounced his teachings as false doctrine, and even attacked his character. They succeeded but too well. In Galatia, at Corinth, and elsewhere they induced a great part of the Christians to fall away from him: and he wrote letters from

Ephesus to Galatia and Corinth, intended chiefly to defend his personal character and his teaching, and to destroy the influence of his opponents, to whom he hardly yielded in bitterness.

In three years he had to leave Ephesus also. On this he passed through Macedonia, where he wrote his second letter to Corinth. Like its predecessor it was chiefly directed against the Jewish-Christian teachers, and soon afterwards he followed it to the capital of Achaia in person. Here he drew up his epistle to the Romans, in which he carefully expounded his doctrinal system. Meanwhile he had not forgotten his promise to make a collection for the believers at Jerusalem among the various communities he had established. Indeed, he had lately been making great efforts to collect a considerable sum of money, in the hope that this brotherly liberality on the part of the Heathen-Christians might close the breach between the two parties. Accordingly, he now set out from Corinth to the City of the Temple, taking the money he had collected with him. But when he reached Jerusalem his hopes were cruelly disappointed. In a tumult, stirred up against him by the Jews, he would have lost his life had not the commander of the Roman garrison interfered and snatched him out of the hands of the furious mob. To secure him from further danger he was sent under an armed escort to Cæsarea, where he was kept in confinement by the governor for two years; after which, fearing that he might be given up to the Jews, he availed himself of his privilege as a Roman citizen, and claimed to have his case investigated before the imperial court at Rome. On his journey he suffered shipwreck, but eventually reached Rome in safety. In the course of the two years that he spent in captivity at Rome he wrote a few more letters, among which are those to Philemon and to the Philippians, and was able in other ways to carry on his work to some extent. Even here, however, he was constantly thwarted by the Jews and the Jewish-Christians, until at last he closed his career by a martyr's death.

Paul was a great man,—perhaps the greatest of all men except Jesus. At any rate, Christianity has to thank him more than any other for its existence. He was a restless worker, a dauntless champion of the principles he adopted, a bold and deep thinker. His lot was any thing but enviable. Bitterly hated, constantly and fiercely opposed by his antagonists, he was but little comprehended by his followers.

Hence his own converts were frequently unfaithful to his ideas and principles. While he was still living, the congregations at Antioch, in Galatia, and at Corinth among others fell away from him in great part, and went over to the Jewish-Christian party, and not long after his death the congregations at Ephesus and elsewhere followed the example. There was no lack of kindred spirits to take up his work and preach his gospel zealously enough, but the opposition to his school also continued after his death. Even his personal character was not spared when he was no more, but was pursued with obloquy and slander. Almost a century after his death a romance written against him was circulated in the community at Rome.

Meanwhile the course of events had necessarily changed the attitude of the two parties. As the number of Heathen-Christians continually increased it became impossible any longer to question their right of citizenship in the Messianic kingdom, even without their passing over to Judaism. So the Jewish-Christians no longer required them to submit to circumcision and to all the regulations of the Mosaic Law. It had gradually become impossible to maintain such demands, and accordingly they were dropped, and the number of commandments which the Heathen-Christians were required to observe was reduced. And again, the devastation of the very centre of Jewish worship in A.D. 70 put an end to the sacrificial service and to many other sacred rites, and consequently many of the points of dispute between the two schools of Christians lost all practical interest. But the conflict over the principle itself,—whether faith alone was the indispensable condition of salvation, or whether it must be accompanied by the observance of certain forms and obedience to an external law,—was still as hot as ever. The Heathen-Christians on their side, with the exception of some few extravagant Paulinists, could not deny the authority of the Apostles and the connection of their own religion with that of the Jews; and, especially when Paul was no longer on the stage, they showed a readiness to yield in some points, and insisted less vehemently on their liberty. Moreover there soon sprang up a middle party, which endeavored to bring about a reconciliation between the two sides by yielding something on either hand.

As is generally the case, the efforts of the middle party were to a certain extent successful. The struggle of the Apostolic age ended in union under the Universal (Catholic)

Church, in which all traces of the former divisions were, as far as possible, obliterated or disguised. This Catholic Church called itself after both Peter and Paul, though giving the higher rank to the former. It excluded from its communion as heretics both the Jewish-Christians who persisted in reviling Paul and maintaining the Law in its integrity (Ebionites) and the Heathen-Christians who opposed the principle of the Law and rejected the authority of the Apostles of Jerusalem (Marcionites).

VII.

THE difference of principle among the earliest disciples of Jesus stamped itself more or less distinctly upon the old Christian literature, and was indeed one of the great motive powers in its production. We possess most of this literature in the New Testament, though some compositions, such as one or more letters of Paul to Corinth, a gospel of the Hebrews, and other's writings have been lost. We also possess a few more documents which may be regarded as belonging to the old Christian literature. They are generally called the writings of the *Apostolic Fathers*. One of them is a letter from Clement to the Corinthians, and another is a letter written under the name of Barnabas. But these are more recent than almost any of the books of the New Testament.

To the books of the New Testament, then, we must now turn our special attention. Some of them, especially the oldest, plunge us into the midst of the conflict between the two parties. Of Paul's letters to Galatia, to Corinth, and to Rome we have already spoken. One of the writings of the opposite party is the book of Revelation, which was written in A.D. 68, or January, 69, a few years after the death of Paul. It attacks his character, but still more his doctrine, and brands his followers as servants of Satan. We learn from it the exact position of the rigid Jewish-Christians at a time when the great majority of the faithful was composed of converted heathens. The Messiah and his kingdom belong to Israel, and Jerusalem will be the chief seat of the kingdom of God. The heathen, in order to participate in it, must first be incorporated into Israel, and even then they will occupy a lower position than that of the true descendants of Abraham,—just as in former times the proselytes had

never been regarded as on the same footing with the Jews themselves. The epistle of James is of later date, and though it is also from the hand of a Jewish-Christian it breathes a far gentler and freer spirit than that of Revelation. It holds that the Jewish ceremonies are annulled, and admits the heathen without conditions; but for all that it is directly and designedly aimed against the doctrine of Paul. On the other hand, certain writings intended to bring about a reconciliation were issued by the friends of Paul. Among these are the epistle to the Hebrews and the book of Acts. Others again involuntarily remind us of the divisions that had formerly prevailed or still existed, and so give us a glimpse into the state of feeling and belief in the circles from which they emanated; while the latest books transplant us into a changed condition of the community and into later ecclesiastical disputes.

In dealing with these questions we must never forget that the majority of the writings of the New Testament were not really written or published by those whose names they bear. For instance, fourteen epistles are said to be Paul's; but we must at once strike off one, namely that to the Hebrews, which does not bear his name at all, and therefore does not even profess to have come from his hand. The other thirteen are all of them intended to pass for his; but in one of them we are distinctly informed (2 Thessalonians, ii. 2) that even during his lifetime letters of which he had not written a word were published under his name. In those days people saw no harm in such literary frauds, though they would now be considered highly culpable, and even criminal. The ancient historians were much in the habit of introducing celebrated personages as actually saying what they imagined would have been appropriate for them to say under the special circumstances; and in the same way it was considered quite permissible for a man to put out letters under the name of another, and thus to bring his own ideas before the world under the protection of an honored sponsor. Thus the two letters to Timothy, and the letter to Titus, were certainly composed long after the death of Paul, though perhaps the second to Timothy contains a few verses that are actually from the hand of the Apostle. It is more than probable that the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians are also unauthentic, and the same suspicion rests, perhaps on the first, but certainly on the second of the epistles to the Thessalonians.

These remarks are equally applicable to the seven General or Catholic epistles, so called because they were accepted by the Catholic Church. The first and last, which are Jewish-Christian in character, are incorrectly ascribed to James and Judas, the brothers of Jesus. The first epistle of Peter was not written by the Apostle whose name it bears, but by a disciple of Paul; and the second, which is perhaps the latest book in the Bible, was not written till about the middle of the second century after Christ. The writer attempts to reason with the grievous disappointment of the Christians at the continued delay of the return of Jesus from heaven; an event which even the Apostles and their contemporaries had eagerly expected, and which the writer of the Revelation, two years before the destruction of Jerusalem, had painted in glowing colors and declared to be close at hand. Finally, of the three epistles of John the first is not an epistle at all, and does not bear any name, while the other two profess to be the work of an elder whose name is not given. All of them place us in a later age and amid other controversies than those of which we have spoken above.

But our interest is more especially excited by the five historical books of the New Testament. If we might really suppose them to have been written by the men whose names they bear, we could never be thankful enough for such precious authorities at first and second hand, and should not hesitate to accept their narratives in the main as substantially correct. For John and Matthew were Apostles of Jesus, and the former, together with his brother James and with Peter, was admitted into his Master's especial confidence. As to Mark, we are told that he lived at Jerusalem, that he was a cousin of Barnabas, a fellow-traveller and friend of Paul, and afterwards a companion and beloved disciple of Peter. Luke is supposed to have been a friend and disciple of Paul, to have accompanied him on most of his journeys, and to have been with him during his last stay at Jerusalem and his imprisonment. Who could be better informed as to the fates of Jesus and the Apostles than these eye-witnesses and their close and intimate friends?

But, alas! not one of these five books was really written by the person whose name it bears,—though for the sake of brevity we shall still call the writers Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,—and they are all of more recent date than their headings would lead us to suppose. The case is not quite the same, however, as with the epistles sent into the world

under the names of Paul, Peter, James, and Judas. We cannot say that the Gospels and the book of Acts are *unauthentic*, for not one of them professes to give the name of its author. They appeared anonymously. The titles placed above them in our bibles owe their origin to a later ecclesiastical tradition which deserves no confidence whatever.

So in order to know how far we can safely rely upon their statements and what use we can make of them, we must look at the contents of the books themselves. Let us begin by examining the Acts of the Apostles. We notice at once that the name is very inappropriate, for the book does not speak of the *actions* of all the twelve or thirteen Apostles, or even of most of them, but is divided into two parts, the first and smaller of which is chiefly concerned with Peter and the other exclusively with Paul. But we need not insist on this. For the history of these two men, in whom we feel so deep an interest, it is almost our only authority; and of the earliest fortunes of the community of Jesus, the primitive history of the Christian Church and the whole of the apostolic age, we should know as good as nothing if we had not the book of Acts. If only we could trust the writer fully! But we soon see that the utmost caution is necessary. For we have another account of some of the things about which this writer tells us,—an account written by the very man to whom they refer, the best possible authority, therefore, as to what really took place. This man is Paul himself. In the first two chapters of the epistle to the Galatians he gives us several details of his own past life; and no sooner do we place his story side by side with that of the Acts than we clearly perceive that this book contains an incorrect account, and that its inaccuracy is not the result of accident or ignorance but of a deliberate design, an attempt—conceived no doubt with the best intentions—to hide in some degree the actual course of events. In short, it attempts to conceal Paul's relations with the other Apostles and the differences of opinion that existed in the early Church. This real discovery gives us the key to the character and purpose of the whole book of Acts. For now that we have in one instance detected its tendency to represent the relations between Paul and the Twelve as more favorable than they really were, and to hide the differences of opinion among the early Christians as completely as possible, we soon perceive the same desire running through all the book. The real state of things in these early times is disguised almost past recognition. In order to reconcile

Paul's enemies to him, and to establish peace between the two parties, the sharp corners are considerably rounded off whenever the great and striking figure of the apostle of the heathens is introduced. At the same time, Peter and James are made more liberal. Indeed, Peter is the first to preach the gospel to the heathen, and on several occasions Paul is represented in the character of a strict Jewish-Christian. In a word, all traces of the dispute are as far as possible obliterated.

This puts us into a position to determine the origin and the historical value of the book of Acts. The writer was evidently a Heathen-Christian who revered the memory of Paul, though he never really understood his doctrine, and had surrendered most of his principles. At the same time he may be regarded as in a certain sense a forerunner (or an early representative) of the primitive Catholic Church. We know how to deal with him therefore. When, in spite of himself, he allows an involuntary betrayal of the existence of these dissensions to leak out, or when his subject is in no way connected with these quarrels, and he had means of investigating it fully, then we may not only hail him as a valuable witness, in the absence of all other informants, but may even accept his statements as deserving of all credit; not indeed as regards the speeches which he puts into the mouths of Paul and others, but as regards the events which he records. This is especially applicable to the later fortunes of Paul, as to which the writer of Acts had access to some very good authorities, the best of all being the itinerary or journal of travels composed by one of the Apostle's companions. Portions of this work he took up almost unaltered into his own. In this itinerary, then, we possess the records of an eye-witness. This is of incalculable value. Paul himself and this unknown companion of his journeys are the only eye-witnesses from whom we have any records in the New Testament that have not been disturbed by later traditions.

And, alas! this later tradition is such a turbid fountain!

VIII.

THE truth of this complaint becomes only too clear when we turn to our Gospels.

Of course we should rejoice still more in an accurate knowledge of the life of Jesus than in a faithful history of the apostolic age. And for this knowledge we have hardly any sources but the four books with which the New Testament begins. No other authorities deserve to be mentioned by their side. Paul gives us a few general characteristics, and makes a few allusions in his letters, but this is all. He had never known Jesus personally. Flavius Josephus, the well-known historian of the Jewish people, was born in A.D. 37, only two years after the death of Jesus; but though his work is of inestimable value as our chief authority for the circumstances of the times in which Jesus and his Apostles came forward, yet he does not seem to have ever mentioned Jesus himself. At any rate, the passage in his "Jewish Antiquities"¹ that refers to him is certainly spurious, and was inserted by a later and a Christian hand. The Talmud² compresses the history of Jesus into a single sentence, and later Jewish writers concoct mere slanderous anecdotes. The ecclesiastical Fathers mention a few sayings or events, the knowledge of which they drew from oral tradition or from writings that have since been lost. The Latin and Greek historians just mention his name. This meagre harvest is all we reap from sources outside the Gospels.

We must be content with the Gospels, then. To learn how far we may trust them we must in the first place compare them with each other. The moment we do so we notice that the fourth stands quite alone, while the first three form a single group, not only following the same general course, but sometimes even showing a verbal agreement which cannot possibly be accidental. For this reason they are called the *synoptical* Gospels; that is to say, the Gospels which contain accounts of the same events — "parallel passages," as they are called — which can be written side by side so as to enable us to take a general view or *synopsis* of all the three, and at the same time compare them with each other. A more careful examination shows us that the difference between Matthew, Mark, and Luke on the one hand and John on the other is so great that we must choose between them, since we cannot

¹ B. xviii. chap. iii. sec. 3.

² See vol. i. p. 31, 32.

possibly harmonize them. According to the first three Jesus utters his wisdom in the form of proverbs, or still more frequently of parables. In John the parables disappear entirely, and profound and elaborate disquisitions are put into the mouth of Jesus. In the first three Gospels his words usually refer to the kingdom of God, in the fourth he almost always speaks of himself. In the former he is said to have lived and preached in Galilee alone till within a few days of his death; in the latter we find him frequently, nay generally, working in Judæa, and especially at Jerusalem. In the former he speaks and acts as an Israelite; in the latter he sometimes separates himself so sharply from the people of Israel that he seems to wish no longer to be considered as belonging to the nation at all. In the former he is a man whose character gradually develops under the conflict in which he is engaged and the work he has taken up; in the latter a more than earthly being, perfect from the very beginning. In a word, John gives us a totally different impression both of the whole and of the separate details from that conveyed by the Synoptics.

Attempts to remove this contradiction have been vain. Every means adopted to this end has turned out a mere idle subtlety. There is no escaping the fact that we must make our choice. Nor can we hesitate as to what that choice shall be. The first three Gospels are far simpler and more natural in tone than the fourth; they bring the historical background of the life of Jesus far more clearly before us; they are written with the object of making his person and his preaching, his deeds and his fortunes, known. In the fourth Gospel John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Evangelist himself always speak in the same spirit and adopt the same style; so that any one can see that it is really the Evangelist who is speaking all the time, and that he simply puts his own ideas, clothed in his own style, into the mouths of Jesus and others. The view here taken of the world and man is utterly foreign to the mind of Jesus, and its point of departure must be looked for in the Alexandrine philosophy. Lastly, the writer himself clearly indicates at the end of his book that his object was not so much to give an account of the life of Jesus as to rouse and strengthen faith in him. His work is an expression of faith rather than a historical narrative. In other words, he does not tell us what Jesus was, but what he, the Evangelist, had found in him,—what Jesus was to him, what influence he had exercised upon his spiritual life, and in what light he

therefore regarded him. If we also bear in mind that this author wrote at a comparatively late period, in the first half of the second century, we shall readily assent to the following conclusion : We may read the fourth Gospel for our edification ; indeed, there is perhaps no other book of the Bible more eminently suited to this purpose. As we read it we feel compelled to ask ourselves whether we too have derived as much spiritual wealth from Jesus as this writer, with his deep piety and high culture, did. But for the history of Jesus we cannot use the work ; we need never consult it, and shall do best to put it entirely out of our minds. In treating of the life of Jesus, then, we shall set this work almost entirely aside, and shall afterwards take it up separately as the most beautiful expression of faith which has come down to us from the post-apostolic age ; but even then we shall not stop to inquire particularly whether any historical fact here and there lies at the basis of its representations.

The fourth Gospel forms a beautiful and well-ordered whole, and bears a pre-eminently individual character, for the very remarkable and exalted personality of the writer has stamped its spirit unmistakably upon every portion of the work. But it is far otherwise with the Synoptic Gospels. They can hardly be said to have had authors at all. They had only editors or compilers. What I mean is, that those who enriched the old Christian literature with these Gospels did not go to work as independent writers and compose their own narratives out of the accounts they had collected, but simply took up the different stories or sets of stories which they found current in the oral tradition or already reduced to writing, adding here and expanding there, and so sent out into the world a very artless kind of composition. Their works were then, from time to time, somewhat enriched by introductory matter or interpolations from the hands of later Christians, and perhaps were modified a little here and there. Our first two Gospels appear to have passed through more than one such revision. The third, whose writer says in his preface that "many had undertaken to put together a narrative (Gospel)" before him, appears to proceed from a single collecting, arranging, and modifying hand.

I spoke just now of oral tradition as having preceded any written record. For a considerable period this tradition was the only source of information as to the fortunes and the teaching of Jesus. It was but natural that as long as Jesus

was living no one should think of writing an account of his words or deeds. And even during the first twenty or thirty years or so after his death, when his disciples were preaching him as the Christ to an ever wider circle, though the want of such Gospels must soon have made itself generally felt, no one undertook to write one. For the Christians expected Jesus himself to return ere long from heaven, and what would then be the use of a written record of his former life?

It was not till the expectation of the return of Jesus had fallen somewhat into the background that such a task could be taken up with affectionate zeal. And meanwhile the oral tradition had already taken a tolerably settled form in the various circles of Christians. In an age when reading and writing were less common than they are at present, the memory was much more tenacious, and words were remembered with greater accuracy. Detached accounts as well as whole sets of narratives referring to the labors of Jesus in Galilee, his journey to Jerusalem, his stay in the city, and his death, were current among the Christians. His parables, his aphorisms, and his more elaborate discourses were also passed from mouth to mouth, sometimes in connection with some event, and sometimes quite detached. One of the early Fathers tells us that the Apostle Matthew wrote a collection of "Sayings of the Lord," in Hebrew, by which he means the local dialect which Jesus and his Apostles spoke. This collection has probably been taken up into our first Gospel, which is specially rich in sayings of Jesus; and it may be from this fact that it derives its title "according to Matthew."

Of course, the preservation and promulgation of the sayings and doings of Jesus by oral tradition for so long a period was attended with certain disadvantages. No doubt the tradition was much firmer than would be the case in our day, but still it was constantly subject to variation. The result is very clearly discernible in our Gospels. There are four principal causes of these transformations of the tradition, which were generally unintentional.

In the first place, *embellishment* was a necessary result of oral promulgation. This will always follow when a story passes from mouth to mouth, especially when it refers to any one for whom a great enthusiasm is felt. One narrator adds a little to it, and the next heightens the coloring somewhat

In the second place, *misunderstandings* may play an important part in changing the form of a tradition. Examples of this process abound. The metaphorical language of the East, in which Jesus usually expressed himself, and which his first disciples sometimes used concerning him, was specially liable to misconception. It was accepted literally, and thus a figure of speech, or even a parable, was reported as if it were an actual event.

Another source of misconception may be found in the *pre-conceived ideas*, especially of a religious character, which exercised so powerful an influence over the tradition from its very origin. The hearers of Jesus, even his Apostles, had very often failed to understand what their Master said, what he did, and what he was aiming at. In their own preaching they reproduced their Master and his teaching not as they really were, but as they had appeared in the light of their own preconceived ideas. And so in after times the original tradition, itself far from pure, was considerably, though unintentionally, modified by such influences as love of the marvellous, the national pride of the Jews, current ideas as to the Messiah and the person of Jesus, and the expectation that he would return to earth.

Closely connected with this last source of error, and most important of all, is the influence exercised upon the tradition by the *conflict of parties* in the apostolic communities. Each of the two schools of this period, so sharply opposed to each other (the Jewish-Christian and the Heathen-Christian), was filled by a deep and sacred conviction that it and it only thought, spoke, and acted in the spirit of the Master whom both acknowledged. Hence it happened that the two parties might report one and the same saying of Jesus so differently that each of them regarded it as passing a sentence of condemnation upon the other. As a rule, this came to pass involuntarily; but, in the very strength of their conviction, the advocates of either view might now and then expressly put such a sentence into the Master's mouth, or in case of need invent some incident in order to bring clearly into view what they were certain must have been his judgment. In the Synoptic Gospels, accordingly, we find certain narratives which refer to Jesus in appearance only, and really rose in the apostolic communities in consequence of the division in their midst, or with direct reference to it. A great deal then depends upon whether the tradition had been promulgated through a Jewish-Christian or a Heathen-Christian medium.

and each Evangelist was guided in the choice of his materials by the school to which he himself belonged. The authorities of the first Evangelist were chiefly Jewish-Christian; the third Evangelist derived his information more from Pauline circles. More than once we shall encounter narratives that cannot possibly be understood in connection with the life of Jesus, and shall transfer them to the period to which they really belong; that is to say, to the history of the Apostles.

But enough. We have seen distinctly that even when dealing with the first three Gospels we must go to work with the utmost caution, must closely examine, minutely compare, and carefully sift their statements, if we are really to gain any genuine knowledge of Jesus and learn his true history. All this is very difficult, and there are many points about which we long to know the truth, but as to which our utmost efforts can secure no certain knowledge. When we place Matthew, Mark, and Luke side by side, we sometimes succeed in recovering the most ancient form of a narrative or saying; sometimes we are surprised to find that the Evangelists themselves, from the very fact of their going to work so artlessly and simply, and introducing most of their alterations without exactly intending it, emend and refute themselves, and so put us upon the right track; sometimes our knowledge of the apostolic age throws a clear light upon the origin and significance of what we read in the Gospels. But in spite of all this, we have constantly to express our regretful ignorance of the true history of the life of Jesus. All the stories of the New Testament, without exception, will be dealt with and explained as we go along, and we shall try to bring out both the beautiful and true and the one-sided or untrue ideas which they contain; even legends¹ may furnish materials for history, as contributions to our knowledge of the times and the surroundings out of which they rose. But, after all, our chief concern is with Jesus. In any case, we shall hear enough of him to be filled with the deepest admiration and reverence for his character, to love him in our inmost hearts, and to feel ourselves unspeakably indebted to him. And if we discover that his first disciples generally misunderstood him, and could never fully appreciate a character to the true greatness of which they were so often blind, we shall lament the fact itself, but shall know how to make use of our knowledge of it. The truth revealed by Jesus can never be

¹ See vol. i. pp. 6-8.

quite obscured. It has been, and still is, the very life of Christianity. If we listen faithfully to its commands, and open our hearts to its influence, it can and will so strengthen us in all that is good and noble that we shall bring no shame upon the name of Christian which we take from Jesus ; it will so build up our character and confirm our moral power that we shall learn, rejoicing in the love of God, to be a true blessing to society, and ever to grow more and more like Jesus. No richer blessing can I wish to you, my readers !

BOOK I.

JESUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE DESCENT OF JESUS.

MATTHEW I.; LUKE III. 23-88.

“**P**EDIGREE of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.”

Such are the words which stand at the head of the first page of the New Testament. There could not be a more natural commencement; for however wearisome a dry list of names may seem, we can easily understand that the early Christians were anxious to trace the descent of Jesus, as fully as possible, up into a hoary antiquity. Some people still keep up their family registers, and attach great value to them; and it is not unusual to set aside for the purpose the blank pages at the beginning of the great family Bible, which descends as an heirloom from father to son, and is always so carefully preserved and honored. But never, perhaps, has the passion for preserving pedigrees been so great as among the Jews after the Captivity; for they jealously defended the purity of their Israelitish descent, and deemed it of the utmost consequence to be able to furnish proof that not a drop of blood polluted by heathen affinities flowed through their veins.

But to return to the genealogy of Jesus. A careful examination brings to light several objections to its authenticity. To begin with, as soon as we read through the first chapter of Matthew we come upon an extraordinary contradiction. First of all we have three series of ancestors, of fourteen generations each — we may check the calculation for ourselves — the last of them ending Jacob, Joseph, Jesus. Well and

good! But in the following verses we are all at once informed that Joseph was not the father of Jesus after all, and that Jesus had really no connection with him. Then what is the meaning of this list of *Joseph's* ancestors with the heading, "Pedigree of *Jesus*"? for all the while, according to this second account, it has nothing whatever to do with Jesus. You will see at once that there is a direct contradiction here. But again, in the Gospel of Luke there is another pedigree of Jesus, or rather of Joseph the father of Jesus, but it only agrees with that of Matthew in fifteen names, and departs from it in no less than forty! Continuing our examination, and inspecting the stories about the birth of Jesus which our first and third Evangelists have given us, we very soon perceive that they are in irreconcilable contradiction with each other, and that each of them taken by itself contains much that is strange and improbable, not to say impossible.

Now any one who has studied general history, especially that of antiquity, will at once remember that the origin of great men is often veiled in obscurity. If a later tradition encircles their cradle with a crown of legendary glory, it does so simply by the exercise of its own imagination; for trustworthy sources of information for the heroes' lives do not begin to flow before their public appearance. All that precedes is mere fiction. We need not wonder, then, that the case is similar with Jesus, who has been revered throughout the ages as the greatest of all men, as the chief benefactor of our race; nay, as something more than man. And the perfect simplicity and absence of ostentation or display which always characterized Jesus makes it seem all the more natural that no record of his early life should have survived. The question is, then, are we to look upon these registers and stories as true history, or simply as at once the evidence and the result of the reverence, the faith, and the grateful love of the Christians?

The answer cannot be doubtful. We know hardly anything of the origin, the childhood, and the youth of Jesus. Since he is the greatest hero not only of Biblical but of universal history, and occupies the place of honor in the story of the moral and religious development of each one of us, every thing that concerns him must arouse our keenest interest, and we cannot help searching for information even on these preliminary matters; but if we expect any great result we shall be bitterly disappointed. Wherever we knock, the door is closed against us. Inasmuch as Jesus begins a new

period of human progress we have begun a new chronological era with him, and are in the habit of reckoning the years backward and forward from his birth; but even the point from which this era should commence is any thing but certain. In the year 525 A.D. the Roman Abbot Dionysius Exiguus fixed it as it is now used, but students of the subject have long been agreed that the data upon which he based his calculations were insufficient, and that he most likely made a mistake of several years. Nor is our knowledge any more definite with regard to the descent of Jesus, and the circumstances of his birth. Even as to the place where he was born opinions differ.

You may naturally ask the cause of all this uncertainty, and it is not difficult to explain. The fact is that the Apostles and other preachers, who brought the gospel to Jews and heathens, confined themselves entirely, in speaking about Jesus, to the time of his public activity in Israel, and laid special stress upon his death and resurrection. To this they could bear witness. Of what went before they had seen nothing, nor had they made any inquiries about it; for at first it was only the most important facts that excited attention. In these early times no special interest was felt in the birth and youth of Jesus, for his disciples tacitly assumed that it was not as an infant, a boy, or a young man, but as a public teacher, and above all in his death, that Jesus had shown himself to be the Christ and our redeemer.

And when the later Christians wished to know more of these early days, there was no one left who could give them any information. Were they content to rest in their ignorance then, inasmuch as it was impossible to learn any more, and fate would have it so? Not at all. It was far more in the spirit of the age to try to determine what *must* have happened. And indeed the Christians firmly believed that they could draw from a source of information which deserved such implicit confidence that even if there had been persons living who were personally acquainted with the facts, it would hardly have been necessary to consult them. This source of information was the Old Testament. Jesus was recognized as the Messiah promised to the fathers; and the prophets had written about the Messiah. It was firmly believed that they had foretold a number of details of the life of the Christ, and that in doing so they could not possibly have made mistakes. Not content with finding in the prophecies and Psalms all sorts of allusions or definite predictions as to the life of Jesus, the

Christians saw in the fortunes of the people of Israel or of its greatest heroes, such as Moses, a foreshadowing of what was to happen to the Messiah. And so by putting together a number of texts from the Old Testament, generally explained in a grossly arbitrary style, they made up a complete history of Jesus. We shall notice this again and again as we advance. We can now understand the way in which they would attempt to fill the great gap in the history of the early years of Jesus, and can make use of our knowledge at once in explaining the origin of these two pedigrees and other things connected with them.

The narratives of the Old Testament have familiarized us with the Messianic expectation. Several of the prophets¹ distinctly say that in the golden age of the future, for which they hope, a descendant of David will hold sway over Israel as king. Now Jesus had not yet become a king; but, thought the Christians, he would be one ere long when he returned from heaven. Was he really of the race of David then? The simple fact is that we know nothing about it; and perhaps you may think that it does not much matter. No more it does. To us, at least, he is neither greater nor less for being or not being a descendant of David. We honor him far too much to attach any value to such an accident. Jesus himself, too, considered it a matter of little or no consequence, and perhaps indirectly denied that his descent was royal.² But the early Christians thought otherwise. They argued: Jesus is the Christ, and therefore it is absolutely certain, on the testimony of all those prophetic utterances, that he *must* have been of the race and family of David.³ This argument necessarily involved the belief that the great-nephews of Jesus, the grandsons of his brother Jude, were also descendants of David; and an old church-Father tells us that the suspicious Emperor Domitian, hearing that in the country of the Jews there were men of royal extraction still alive, had these relatives of Jesus brought before him; but the sight of their hands hardened by honest work allayed his fears.

The general statement that Jesus must have been a son of

¹ Isaiah xi. 1, 10; Jeremiah xxviii. 5, xxx. 9, xxxiii. 15, 17, 21, 22; Ezekiel xxxiv. 23 f., xxxvii. 24 f.; Hosea iii. 5; Amos ix. 11; Michah v. 2; Zechariah iii. 8, vi. 12, xii. 8.

² Matthew xxii. 41-46 (Mark xii. 35-37).

³ John vii. 42; Acts ii. 30, xiii. 23; Romans i. 2, 3; 2 Tim. ii. 8; Hebrews vii. 14; Revelation v. 5, xii. 16.

David did not long satisfy the Christians; and by the aid of names and catalogues from the Old Testament they constructed pedigrees for Joseph, the father of Jesus. We have already alluded to the two which Matthew and Luke have preserved for us. The first begins with Abraham; the other goes back to Adam. These pedigrees have not the smallest historical value. Only to mention a single point, their authors did not shrink from the most arbitrary handling of their materials for the sake of obtaining symmetrical results with special reference to the sacred number *seven* and its multiples. (3×14 in one case and $5 \times 14 + 7$ in the other.) Moreover, these two registers destroy each other. Not only do the names differ in almost every case, but in the one there are exactly fourteen generations more between Jesus and David than in the other. But it does not follow that they have no interest for us. In the first place, they offer a striking illustration of the way in which history was written in those days. Again, on comparing the two, we see the different spirit in which the two compilers worked. The first list, which only mounts up to Abraham the ancestor of Israel, intends to represent Jesus distinctly as *Israel's Messiah*, and must therefore have arisen in Jewish-Christian circles. The other, which goes up to "Adam the son of God," the ancestor of all mankind, wishes to show that Jesus belongs to the whole human race, and is "the second Adam,"¹ the true man, and the son of God. This list, therefore, must be of Heathen-Christian origin, or rather must have passed through a revision made in the Heathen-Christian spirit. Finally, it follows of necessity from both the genealogies that their compilers entertained no doubt that Joseph was the father of Jesus. Otherwise the descent of Joseph would not have been in the least to the point.

Connected with this firm belief that the Messiah must be a descendant of David was the conviction that as David's son he must be born in David's city, that is Bethlehem. This was deduced from a passage in Michah, which was understood to mean "at Bethlehem, in Judaea, shall Christ be born,"² though the prophet really meant nothing whatever of the kind. There was a great difficulty here. The primitive tradition declared emphatically that Nazareth was the place from which Jesus came. We may still see this distinctly enough in our Gospels. Jesus is constantly called *the Naza-*

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 45, 47.

² Matthew ii. 4-6; compare John vii. 42.

rene, or Jesus of *Nazareth*. This was certainly the name by which he was known in his own time; and of course such local names were given to men from the place of their birth, and not from the place in which they lived, which might constantly be changing. Nazareth is called in so many words his own, that is, his native city,¹ and he himself describes it so.² But in spite of all this the Christians were convinced that he *must* have been born at Bethlehem, so they had to assume that Joseph and Mary were at Bethlehem at the time of his birth. Matthew simply says that it was so,³ and adds that they settled at Nazareth some years afterwards for a special reason;⁴ and then running off upon the sound of the name he sees in this change of abode the fulfilment of another prophetic intimation indirectly conveyed by the history of Samson: “He shall be a Nazarite unto God,”⁵ says the angel to Manoah’s wife; and the words, thought the Evangelist, referred to Jesus as well as Samson, for there was not so much difference between *Nazarite* and *Nazarene*!⁶

Sometimes the Old Testament could not supply the missing particulars which seemed necessary to explain some admitted fact in the life or character of Jesus, and then there was nothing left but to fill in the gap by guess-work. In such cases it happened, not infrequently, that the literal interpretation of spiritual expressions, and the misunderstanding of the metaphorical style of the East in which the Gospel was first preached, so totally distorted the ancient tradition as to draw conclusions from it which it was never for a moment intended to sanction. An example of this process, too, will help us to understand the origin of the accounts of the descent of Jesus.

In the first and third Gospels we read that Jesus was born miraculously, and that Joseph was only his foster-father. How did this belief arise? In the first place, we must notice that it was a common idea in ancient times that great founders of religions such as Buddha and Zoroaster, philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato, and kings such as Romulus and Alexander, had had no earthly father. Perhaps the Christians were confirmed in this idea with regard to their own Master by applying a passage in Isaiah,⁷ which they

¹ Matthew xiii. 54 (Mark vi. 1).

² Matthew xiii. 57 (Mark. vi. 4; Luke iv. 23, 24), compare John vi. 41, 42 and i. 45, 46.

³ Matthew ii. 1.

⁴ Matthew ii. 22, 23.

⁵ Judges xiii. 5.

⁶ Matthew ii. 23.

⁷ Isaiah vii. 14.

completely misunderstood, to the mother of the Messiah, and therefore to the mother of Jesus.¹ Besides this, they very truly saw in Jesus an altogether unique personality. They felt how far above all other men he stood; that his nobility of soul, his goodness, his purity, his exaltation of character, and his love raised him above all comparison with other men. They were not content to explain these facts from the beauty of his natural disposition, its happy development, and the holiness and strength of his will. They were determined to find a supernatural cause. Three separate representations found acceptance in succession. In the earliest times the Christians believed that when Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit descended upon him. Somewhat later he was said to have been born into the world miraculously, and not as an ordinary human being. Finally, an existence in heaven previous to his appearance on earth was ascribed to him in order to account to some extent for his being so far exalted above other men.

But it was that misunderstanding of figurative language, of which we spoke just now, that was the chief cause at work in this instance. "Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit," said the believers. To understand this declaration, we must bear in mind the peculiar usages of New Testament language. It needs but little knowledge of ourselves and others to teach us that to be and to do good is no easy task that we can accomplish without effort. Our perverse and selfish nature has to be subdued, and our better moral nature raised to supremacy. But what we should express now-a-days by saying "we must change our lives and become new and better men," is expressed in New Testament language thus: We must be born again, born of the Holy Spirit, the principle of all good.² So when the disciples wished to say of Jesus that he did not need to *become* good because he *was* good, that he did not need to become another and a new man because he was a new man already, they expressed it by saying, "He was not born *again*, because he was *born of the Holy Spirit* from the first." And when the original meaning of this expression was forgotten, it was easily misunderstood and taken literally instead of metaphorically.

Beyond the particulars already mentioned and explained, the first Evangelist has nothing to tell us of the descent of Jesus. The story of his birth was afterwards embellished in various ways, but Matthew is still very short and simple.

¹ Matthew i. 23.

² John iii. 3, 5, 6; Titus iii. 5.

He only tells us that Joseph saw an angel in a dream, and was told that the child which Mary (to whom he was only betrothed as yet) hoped soon to bear was miraculously conceived, would be Israel's redeemer, and must be called Jesus, that is *deliverer, bringer of salvation*. The scruples which Joseph had previously felt were now removed, and in obedience to the divine command he took Mary as his wife, and soon afterwards called her first-born son by the name which the angel had given him.

In taking our leave for the present of Matthew, we must not fail to notice that though these stories of the Davidic origin of Jesus and his birth of the virgin Mary at Bethlehem spring from the religious prejudices of the early Christians, yet they bear witness also to the deep impression which Jesus made upon them, and their intense and unreserved devotion to him personally. Regarded from this point of view, the stories still retain their value for us, though we cannot help feeling that after all their authors never really understood the Master.

In this first sketch explanations, arguments, and refutations have taken the place of regular narrative, but all that has now been said will be an immense help to us in future. We have been breaking a pathway, as it were, through brushwood and jungle, and when we meet with such obstructions again they will hardly delay our progress at all. Once convinced that our knowledge of the apostolic age throws light upon the narratives of the Gospels, we may henceforth make free use of the key we have discovered.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH AND YOUTH OF JOHN.

LUKE I. 5-25, 57-80.

THE Gospel history does not begin, as we might have expected, with its great hero, Jesus. But to prepare us, as it were, for his appearance, it associates with him another prophet, who was to proclaim his coming, as a herald announces the approach of his king. There is some reason in this, for the new day that breaks upon the religious life of the world when the sun of truth rises above the horizon, is

Jesus, was indeed heralded by its morning star. On the threshold of this new course of spiritual development we see the mighty form of one who belonged to the old period himself and stood upon the soil of Israel's religion, but who points with outstretched hand to the great salvation that is drawing near, though he himself has not as yet formed any true conception of its nature and extent. His name is John. The position in which he stands towards the Messianic kingdom reminds us of the fortunes of that other man of God, Moses, who led the children of Israel towards the promised land, brought them up to its very boundaries, but might not set his own foot upon its soil; for he breathed his last on Mount Nebo, so near to the goal he had passionately longed to reach, and the purpose to which he had devoted his life.

The preaching of the Apostles themselves¹ and the earliest Gospel tradition² appear to have opened with the work of John. We need not wonder, therefore, that when the Christians of a later time endeavored to mount up to the origin of their religion, and prefaced their account of the public life of Jesus by stories about his birth and childhood, Luke should have tried to go to the very root of the whole matter by opening his work with a similar account of the birth of John. After what has been said already, we shall see that from the very nature of the case this story must be a legend of later origin, but it is none the less interesting on that account. Here it is:—

Under the reign of King Herod there dwelt in the mountain districts of southern Palestine, in a city of Judah—Hebron it has been supposed—a devout and virtuous couple. Both man and wife were of noble and priestly blood, but that did not make them proud and worldly Sadducees like the magnates of Jerusalem. On the contrary, Zachariah and Elizabeth, for so they were called, were simple people, who preferred to keep away from the court and from the turmoil of the capital. Not only were they strict in their observance of all the precepts of the Law and the tradition, and irreproachable in their lives, but they looked forward with eager expectation to the founding of the Messianic kingdom. The rule of the Idumæan Herod, the minion of the Romans, grew still heavier and more hateful as his age advanced, and made them, together with so many pious Israelites besides, long all the more passionately that God would now be gracious to his

¹ Acts i. 22, x. 37.

² Mark i. 1-4.

people, would fulfil the promises he had given by the prophets, restore the throne of David, and enrich Israel with all spiritual and temporal blessings.

In their domestic life they felt a grievous want, for they were childless ; and since they had both reached a great age they could hardly hope that the wish of their hearts would yet be fulfilled, and their disgrace removed. For among the Jews it was reckoned a disgrace to be childless, and these people knew not how they had deserved it. And so, old as they were, they could not give up praying that this curse might be removed ; and as Zachariah offered his constant prayers for the deliverance and glory of Israel, he could not help adding his supplication that, as in ancient days to Sarah and Manoah's wife and Hannah, so now to his Elizabeth, God would give a son after long and almost hopeless waiting.

Now the priests were divided into four-and-twenty classes or families, called after the two sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, and each class in turn conducted the services of the temple for a week. About twice in the year, therefore, when the time came round for the eighth class, to which he belonged, Zachariah would journey to Jerusalem to acquit himself of his official duties. It was the custom to decide by lot which member of the class on duty should have the privilege of burning the incense on the golden altar in the Holy Place. It was a great privilege, for it brought the offerer as near to the face of the Lord as it was ever possible or allowable for even a priest to go, except, indeed, the high priest himself. Once on a time the lot fell to Zachariah. He laid the incense and the aromatic spices reverently in the scale, and entered the sanctuary. When he came to the altar of incense, he poured out the glowing coals which another priest had carried in after him, and then strewed the incense over them. The cloud of fragrance rose — a symbol of the prayers of the saints¹ — and filled the chamber. But what is this? Great terror has laid hold of Zachariah. At the right of the altar, the place of propitious omens, by the glimmer of the lamps upon the golden candlestick, he discerns through the thick clouds of vapor a heavenly form. It was an angel of the Lord that stood before him ! But he must overcome the fear that possessed him ; for it was a messenger of good, who came to promise him that God would grant his prayer. He should have a son, and was to call him

¹ Revelation v. 8.

John (Johanan), that is, *God is propitious*. His birth would give great joy to many, to his parents first of all; he would be a great religious hero, a Nazarite all his life long, and a prophet like Elijah of old. He would prepare for the Messianic kingdom by restoring piety and virtue to honor in Israel. Zachariah could hardly believe the message. He and his wife were now so old! Then the angel made himself known as Gabriel, one of the seven spirits of the throne, or angel-princes, and punished Zachariah for his want of faith by making him dumb. He was not to recover speech until the promise was fulfilled.

Meanwhile the people were standing in the fore-courts and muttering their prayers, as they waited for Zachariah to return from the sanctuary and give them the priestly blessing. What could have happened to him that he stayed so long? At last he came out, but, though he stretched out his arms and motioned with his hand, he could not utter a sound. Then they understood that he had seen a vision.

When his week of duty was over, he returned at once to his dwelling-place. What joy to Elizabeth that the shame of her childlessness would be removed! But for a long time she kept the secret that she hoped to be a mother carefully to herself; and when in the course of time she actually gave birth to a male infant, her fellow townspeople and relatives rejoiced with all their hearts in the blessing that God had given her. Eight days after the child's birth, they all came up to the ceremony of circumcision and naming. They wanted the child to be called Zachariah, after his father, but Elizabeth herself said it must be John. As no one in the family had ever had this name, they referred to the father, who was still speechless, for his decision. He took the writing tool, and scratched on a wax tablet, "His name is John." As soon as he had thus fulfilled what Gabriel had enjoined, his powers of speech were given him again, and to the amazement of all present he poured out his heart in a lofty song of praise to God. This wondrous child was a pledge to him that God's great promise, the coming of the Messiah, would soon be fulfilled; and in his sacred joy the happy father felt as though the deliverance of Israel from the hated yoke of the tyrant and shameful dependence upon heathen Rome were already accomplished, and the illustrious son of David were already come. All that the prophets had predicted would now come to pass; the covenant that the Lord had made with the generations of old, and his oath to

Abraham, would be confirmed, and his people would worship him unmolested, in freedom and in might. Well might Zachariah utter the rapturous prophecy, that his new-born son would prepare the great deliverance of God's mercy, and be a prophet in Israel!

Of course these strange events produced a deep impression. The tale was passed from mouth to mouth through the whole country round, and every one questioned and wondered what the boy would turn out to be. Evidently he was no ordinary child.

Nor did he grow up as ordinary children do. For while his body and soul developed freely, he spent the years of childhood and youth far from the tumult and uncleanness of the world, in the wilderness hard by his native place, till the moment came for him to appear in Israel as a prophet.

This story bears every mark of being a pure invention. It carries us right to the centre of the religious ideas and conceptions of the Jews, and with them it stands or falls. If we cannot accept these beliefs, we cannot for a moment regard the narrative as trustworthy. Only consider! An angel comes upon the scene; but is it not remarkable that his name is as good Hebrew as though he were a Jew? Might we not just as well suppose the inhabitants of heaven to speak Greek or English as Hebrew? The angel makes himself known as Gabriel, "who stands before God;" but this idea that there were different ranks of angels, and that the seven highest chiefs, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, and the rest, surrounded God's throne as his first ministers of state, is of course a mere figment of the imagination. It is not even an originally Jewish belief, for though the Jews themselves had long thought of God as though he were an Eastern monarch, and had imagined heaven, his abode and that of the angels, to be arranged like a royal court, yet the details of their angelology were for the most part borrowed from the Persians. Then, again, nothing could be more pardonable than the doubts entertained by Zachariah, for he did not even know with what an exalted being he was conversing. Abraham and Sarah had laughed on hearing a similar announcement from the lips of God himself, and had escaped with a simple reprimand; but later Jewish superstition would not tolerate a moment's questioning of any thing that was held to be, or claimed to be, a supernatural revelation, and this is why the priest has such a heavy punishment

to bear. And again, in Zachariah's song of praise we find the son of David, the mighty king, the deliverance from heathen oppression, in a word, the Jewish Messianic expectation which was never fulfilled; but in the story the song represents the pure and perfect truth, for the happy father "prophesies, being filled with the Holy Spirit." But enough. From what we have noticed already, especially from this last point, we may reach a conclusion which the scenes that follow will confirm; namely, that the first two chapters of Luke, which record the birth of John and Jesus and stand quite alone, are taken from Jewish-Christian sources, though perhaps partly recast by the Evangelist to suit his purpose. Such an origin is indicated by their very style and language, which show a far stronger Hebrew coloring than characterizes the rest of the Gospel.

What is the origin of our story? It was natural enough that in the case of an only child, especially if its parents had long hoped and waited in vain for such a blessing, the Jews should have thought "the child has surely some great destiny marked out for him by God." But then the process was reversed by the legends, and because a man turned out to be remarkable, it was said "he must have been the only child of a couple who had remained childless for years," — a bitter trial to the Israelite, and one which he regarded as a sign of God's displeasure. In the same vein, the apocryphal "Gospel of James," towards the end of the second century, tells us of the birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her parents, Joachim and Anna, deeply grieved and bitterly reviled because of the sterility of their wedlock, each receives an angelic vision, with a promise that the curse shall be removed; and, in course of time, Mary comes into the world. In the case of Zachariah and Elizabeth, the wonder is still further heightened by our being informed that they were aged people, quite stricken in years. But, if we can hardly believe that people of such an age could have the quiet of their home so happily disturbed by the birth of a child, we have no difficulty, on the other hand, in explaining why such a fiction should have been produced. Not only the fates of the Christ, but those of his predecessor — and such was John held to be — were supposed to be indicated in the Old Testament; and this story is manifestly copied from the account of Abraham and Sarah, Manoah and his wife, and Elkanah and Hannah. From the first of these stories the legend borrowed the great age of the father and mother.

and the father's slowness to believe the promise.¹ The life-long dedication as a Nazarite and the lofty destination of the promised son are taken from the story of the birth of Samson,² while Hannah's first-born son is also described as a Nazarite and a great prophet.³ Finally, a precedent for the appearance of Gabriel and the dumbness of Zachariah might also be found in Scripture; for in the Book of Daniel the same archangel appears and is mentioned by name,⁴ and Daniel himself is on another occasion visited, at least for a time, with dumbness.⁵

This is certainly the way in which the story rose. But if we reflect for a moment we shall readily admit that the feeling which lies at the bottom of it is not altogether false. Such a use as is here made of the Old Testament is doubtless unwarrantable and due to mistaken conceptions; but the fundamental idea from which it starts is perfectly true, in spite of all the gross exaggerations which have deformed it. This fundamental idea is the belief that a single thread of development runs through the history of Israel's religion and the origin of Christianity, through the Old and the New Covenant; that a close connection of origin and purpose must be recognized between the elect of former times and God's new messengers, John and Jesus, and that in the persons and the circumstances of these two the echo of a hoary antiquity may be often caught. There is a more or less marked coincidence between the ancient and the modern prophets in their sense of God's summons to them, in their work and their hope, in their struggles, their disappointments, and the opposition they had to encounter. As we go on, we shall often see how Jesus himself clung to this thought, and found in the history of the ancient heroes of faith a foreshadowing of the reception he would meet and the fate in store for him. And even in this story of John's miraculous birth there is a certain fitness. The character, the actions, and the nature of commonplace men are easily enough explained by ordinary causes, such as parentage, position, and circumstances, and it seems unnecessary to take any special or original factor into account; but wherever there is true genius or true nobility and exaltation of character,—even without celebrity, for celebrated men are not always great, nor great men celebrated,—then it seems to us as if the spirit

¹ Gen. xvii. 17, xviii. 13.

² 1 Samuel i. 11, ii. 26, iii. 19-21.

³ Daniel x. 15.

⁴ Judges xiii.

⁵ Daniel viii. 16, ix. 21.

of power, of holiness, and of love that dwells in man, in a word, it seems as if God himself were working in some special way.

There is one more point in the story which calls for special notice, since it possesses a peculiar interest in connection with the rest of the Gospel history. When Gabriel promises Zachariah that his son will make ready for the fulfilment of the Messianic promise, he uses the words, "He shall go out before God, the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah." In itself, this expression would strike us simply as a comparison between John and the most renowned of the prophets made as a testimony in John's honor. But even in the more ancient passages of the Gospels Elijah is constantly mentioned, and John identified with him. Nay, Jesus himself expressly testifies of John, "He is the Elijah who was to come."¹

What is the meaning of this? Malachi had promised that, before the fearful judgment which would inaugurate the Messianic age, Yahweh "would send his messenger to prepare the way before him," that is, to remove every thing that offended him,—the want of reverence and mercy, and all the other sins of the Israelites.² This messenger was to be "the prophet Elijah, who would put an end to domestic feuds."³ Now Gabriel directly quotes this prophecy as about to be fulfilled in the son of Elizabeth's old age. But the quotation seems inappropriate and arbitrary; for John was not Elijah, and the archangel, perceiving this, gave a fresh turn to the words, and said "a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah." But the passage in Malachi distinctly announced the coming of Elijah himself, and the Jews accordingly looked for the return of the ancient prophet in person. It seems that they appealed in confirmation to the words put into the mouth of Moses: "Yahweh shall raise up a prophet in your midst, *like unto me.*"⁴ No one had come after Moses who stood so high in the people's estimation as Elijah. The deep impression he had left behind him and the colossal proportions assumed by his figure in tradition are attested by the legends that were circulated about him.⁵ No other hero lived on in the thoughts and imagination of the people as he did;⁶ the Rabbis circulated a host of stories about him; and to this very day a chair is left empty for him when the Jews circumcise their chil-

¹ Matthew xi. 14.

² Malachi iii. 1.

³ Malachi iv. 5, 6.

⁴ Deuteronomy xviii. 15-18.

⁵ 1 Kings xvii. ff., and vol. iii. ch. xii.

⁶ Luke iv. 25, 26; James v. 17, 18; above all, Jesus Sirach xlvi. 1-12.

dren ! But the Old Testament itself gave ground enough for regarding Elijah as “the prophet like unto Moses, whom Yahweh should raise up.” He had every right to be regarded as the representative of the prophetic order. Nay, had he not, like the great law-giver, seen and spoken to Yahweh on Mount Horeb?¹ And this is why the names of Moses and Elijah are constantly associated in the New Testament, and the two represented as on an equality with each other.² Moreover, there was a special reason for regarding it as possible that Elijah might return to Israel, for according to the legend he had not died, but had been taken up alive to heaven. It was but natural to suppose that his abode in the dwelling-place of God and the angels was but for a time ; that he was taken there provisionally, to manifest himself again at the appointed time and to fulfil his mission. His task would then be to avert the divine wrath ere it was yet too late, by the power of his preaching to Israel ; to restore domestic peace to the bosom of his people ; to collect the oppressed and scattered tribes, and restore them to their former prosperity. Blessed was he who should live to see the day ! And even now the belief still lives among the Jews that Elijah will revisit Israel three days before the Messiah.

The contemporaries of Jesus, then, were convinced that Elijah would come to restore all things in Israel to their proper state,³ in order to prepare for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Such was the teaching of the Scribes,⁴ and such the expectation of the people.⁵ But John was not Elijah, and knowing, as he must have done, that he was not the ancient prophet come to earth again, he never professed that he was.⁶ What was it, then, that made the Jewish-Christian who sketched this scene call John *an Elijah*, and, by speaking of “a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah,” give such a dexterous turn to the prophecy of Malachi and the expectations of the Israelites as to make them applicable to John ? How could the second Evangelist begin his work by quoting this prophetic passage as though it were fulfilled in John?⁷ And what right had Jesus himself to say in the hearing of the people : “If you will receive it, he

¹ 1 Kings xix. 8-18.

² Matthew xvii. 3 (Mark ix. 4; Luke ix. 30); Revelation xi. 3 ff. Compare Revelation xi. 6 with 1 Kings xvii. 1, and Exodus vii. 19.

³ Matthew xvii. 11 (Mark ix. 12). ⁴ Matthew xvii. 10; Mark ix. 11.

⁵ Matthew xvi. 14 (Mark viii. 28; Luke ix. 19).

⁶ Compare John i. 21.

⁷ Mark i. 2.

is the Elijah that should come,”¹ and afterwards to repeat and elaborate this explanation to his disciples?²

It was because John had been courageous enough not to wait any longer for a prophet who had been dead a thousand years to come to earth again, but had said, “I will do it!” and had seized the work from Elijah’s hand. He could not sit still and wait. The Messianic kingdom *must* come now. It might seem a piece of presumptuous audacity, a desperate act of violence, but he was determined himself to hasten the founding of the kingdom of God; and thus he tacitly stepped into Elijah’s place.

Well might Gabriel say to the priest, “Your son shall be great in the sight of the Lord;” well might the Evangelist describe his growth in the words, “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.”

We can understand the testimony of Jesus: “Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”³



CHAPTER III.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

LUKE I. 26-56; II. 1-20.

NEARLY half a year had passed, says Luke, since Zachariah’s vision in the temple, when God summoned his faithful Gabriel once more, and gave him a message of supreme and joyous import. Obedient to his command, Gabriel descended from heaven and alighted in the Galilean city of Nazareth. In this place dwelt a certain Joseph, who was on the point of being married to a maiden of the same place, whose name was Mary. The message of the angel was to her. He entered the chamber where she sat. “All hail, thou favored one of heaven! The Lord is with thee!” he exclaimed. Mary was troubled and perplexed, not knowing what this solemn greeting meant. But Gabriel quieted her fears, and announced to her the birth of a son, whom she was to call *Jesus*. He would ascend the throne of

¹ Matthew xi. 14; compare verse 10.

² Matthew xvii. 11-13 (Mark ix. 12, 13).

³ Matthew xi. 11

the Messiah, and hold sway over Israel for ever. Mary replied in amazement that she was not married yet, but the angel set the difficulty aside by an appeal to God's omnipotence. Her child would be, in the most literal sense of the word, a son of the Most High. To confirm her faith he announced to her that her cousin Elizabeth hoped to become a mother in her old age; and when Mary in humility and gratitude had received the promise vouchsafed to her, the angel rose up again on high.

Following out the suggestion sent to her from God, Mary lost no time in paying a visit to Elizabeth. It was a distant journey to the mountains of Judah in the south, but she longed to visit and speak to her aged relative, who was in so much the same position as herself. She had no cause to repent of her resolution; for she had no sooner crossed the threshold of Zachariah's house and offered her greeting to Elizabeth, than the latter, enlightened at the very moment by God, welcomed her as blessed among women, as the mother of her Lord, and was so filled with sacred enthusiasm and religious awe that the joyous exaltation came on Mary too, and she gave vent to her ecstasy in a song of thanksgiving to God for the goodness he had shown to her, and above all for the deliverance of Israel from the heathen yoke and the fulfilment of His promises to the fathers. We can well understand that Mary prolonged her stay with her cousin to its utmost possible extent; she remained in Elizabeth's house three months, but was then obliged to leave her and go back to Nazareth.

It was not at Nazareth, however, in the house of her betrothed, that she gave birth to the child. God had ordained it otherwise. About this time, when the pro-consul Publius Sulpicius Quirinus was governor of Syria, a royal decree was issued at Rome, to the effect that a census or rating should be made of all the world; that is to say, of the whole Roman empire. It was called a *registration* in those days, and consisted in drawing up lists for taxation, in which every one's name, means of subsistence, and property were entered. In the kingdom of Herod, as elsewhere, this census must be made; but in this district a very peculiar mode of carrying it out was adopted. Each citizen was to go and be entered at the place whence his family was originally derived, and where the family roll was kept. As a descendant of David, therefore, Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, David's native city. Mary might have stayed at Nazareth

had she chosen to do so, and Joseph might have had her registered as his betrothed ; but, in spite of the difficulties so long a journey must have offered her, she accompanied him to Bethlehem. This considerably lengthened the time they spent on the way, which under ordinary circumstances would have been three days. At last they reached the place of their destination, not without much care and anxiety.

They were very unfortunate when they got there, however. If they had hoped to find a comfortable resting-place they were disappointed. The same cause that had brought them to Bethlehem had also brought a host of others, who had arrived before them, and had taken up all the available accommodation. In the caravansary, a great building open to travellers, in which they and their beasts of burden could generally spend the night for nothing, there was no more room. What was to be done? They were at their wits' end ; for they had no acquaintances upon whose hospitality they could reckon, and they were too poor to hire a lodging, even if every house had not been more than full already. So at last they were compelled to go into the stable of the inn, and make the best of such accommodation as it offered.

It was high time they did so, for that very night, when all around were sunk in sleep, and Joseph and Mary were quite alone, she brought a baby-boy into the world. The young mother herself did all that was needed for her first-born child, gently and carefully wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him down in the manger that was meant to hold the cattle's food !

There lay the helpless little thing ! The world gave no heed to his first cry, and no one knew that a man was born. But a heart that overflowed with a mother's pride offered up its homage to the God of mercy, and Joseph knelt by the manger and thanked the Lord from the depths of his soul that He had been with them in their need.

That same night, perhaps an hour or two later, they received an unexpected visit ; but so far from disturbing them it was an unspeakably joyful surprise. Certain men, whom their humble attire seemed to mark as shepherds, respectfully and cautiously asked to be admitted. Their faces glowed with sacred enthusiasm ; their eyes were lighted up with eager expectation. What could have happened to them ? As soon as they entered they began to look about, and asked for the new-born babe. How did they know any thing of him ? Let them tell their own story.

At the moment of the baby's birth, they were keeping watch over their flocks by night in the open country round Bethlehem. As they were sitting and lying about, talking to one another, or occupied with their own thoughts, a wonder came to pass which at first filled them with deadly terror. The darkness was suddenly dispelled by an unearthly glory, as the light that shines round the throne of God flooded all the scene. An angel stood before them, and quieted their fears. He brought good news for Israel. The Messiah was born that very night at Bethlehem. They would easily find him,—a new-born child laid in a manger. The shepherds had scarcely heard the news, and had not yet recovered from their amazement, when the heavenly music of angel choirs swept through the air in sweeter tones than earth had ever heard :—

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace on earth!
His will is good toward man. . . .

The ineffably sweet and glorious vision was gone, and all was still again. The shepherds were left gazing at one another; but in another moment they were hurrying to Bethlehem to assure themselves of the truth of this great news. And there they found the humble scene, just as it had been described to them! They told their tale to all who would hear it, and made known everywhere what God had announced to them about this baby. The wondrous story waked amazement far and near, and if many of those who heard it soon forgot it again, it was not so with Mary. Not a word was lost by her; and not only as the shepherds, rendering high praise to God, were returning to their work, but often and often in after years, she pondered in quiet rapture over that vision and that song.

Such is the well-known story of the birth of Jesus, one of the sweetest and most deeply significant of all the legends in the Bible. That it is a legend, without even the smallest historical foundation, we must, of course, admit; or if we have any doubt on the subject, a moment's consideration will remove it.

All that was said of the appearance of Gabriel to Zachariah¹ is equally applicable to the present case. Indeed, the difficulties here are still greater. For not only in Mary's song, which is imitated from Hannah's,² does the Jewish Messianic

¹ See pp. 46, 47.

² 1 Samuel iii. 1-10, and vol. i. p. 436.

expectation reappear, but also in the words of the angel himself, who foretells to Mary that her son shall sit upon the throne of David his ancestor, and rule over Israel. Now of course, if a messenger from heaven had really come to bring a divine revelation to Mary, the result must have confirmed his predictions ; and since Jesus never fulfilled these expectations it is obvious that the revelation was never made. Both the promise and the song of praise owe their origin to the obstinate belief of the Jewish-Christians, retained even after the death of Jesus, that he would come again from heaven, would expel the Romans, establish an earthly kingdom, and, in short, realize their dreams of national triumph.¹

We must add that the representation given by Matthew is irreconcilable with that of Luke. The message of Gabriel to Mary, her visit to Elizabeth, and the joyous congratulations of the latter would have dispensed with the necessity of an angel's appearing to Joseph in a dream to remove his scruples as to consummating his marriage. This journey to the mountains of Judah, then, can find no place in the Gospel of Matthew, nor indeed can it be fitted into the historical framework of the life of Jesus ; for when he and John afterwards met, as men, they were entire strangers to each other, and this could not have been the case if their mothers had been near relatives, and had been so well acquainted from the very first with the future of their sons and the position in which they would stand to each other. But above all we must note, that according to the first Gospel Joseph and Mary lived at Bethlehem, according to the third at Nazareth. From the belief which they both accepted as an article of faith that the Christ must be born at Bethlehem, Matthew simply concluded that Joseph and Mary lived there ; whereas Luke (or his authority) was too well aware of the uniformity of the tradition that they had always lived at Nazareth to accept this explanation, and therefore hit upon another, after much reflection. He brings them up to the city of David on a very special occasion and for a very short period. Hardly have they got there when Jesus is born,² and within six weeks they are on their way home again.³

This special occasion was the census.⁴ But here again we are met by overwhelming difficulties. In itself, the Evangelist's account of the manner in which the census was carried out is entirely incredible. Only fancy the indescribable confu-

¹ Acts i. 6, and elsewhere.

² Luke ii. 39.

³ Luke ii. 6.

⁴ Luke ii. 1-5.

sion that would have arisen if *every one*, through the length and breadth of the land of the Jews, had left his abode to go and enrol himself in the city or village from which his family originally came, even supposing that he knew where it was. The census under David was conducted after a very different fashion.¹ But it is still more important to note that the Evangelist falls into the most extraordinary mistakes throughout. In the first place history is silent as to a census of the whole (Roman) world ever having been made at all. In the next place, though Quirinus certainly did make such a register in Judaea and Samaria, it did not extend to Galilee; so that Joseph's household was not affected by it. Besides it did not take place till ten years after the death of Herod, when his son Archelaus was deposed by the Emperor, and the districts of Judaea and Samaria were thrown into a Roman province. Under the reign of Herod nothing of the kind took place, nor was there any occasion for it. Finally, at the time of the birth of Jesus the governor of Syria was not Quirinus, but Quintus Sentius Saturninus. You will easily see that, if the occasion of the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem rests upon a tissue of confusions and mistakes, the whole story falls to the ground.

One more remark, which would be enough in itself to justify us in absolutely rejecting the whole account of the birth of Jesus. Every other passage of the New Testament which bears upon the question, the sequel of the life of Jesus, the whole contents of the Gospels, in a word, all accessible sources of information without exception, are in direct contradiction with it. We have already seen that Nazareth is called the birthplace of Jesus, both by himself and every one else, and that two distinct pedigrees were drawn up on the supposition that Joseph was his father.² So, too, in the stories of the presentation in the temple³ and of the child Jesus at Jerusalem,⁴ Joseph is called his father. Jesus is repeatedly described as the son of the carpenter,⁵ or the son of Joseph, without the least indication that the expression is not strictly in accordance with fact.⁶ The Apostle Paul expresses himself in the same sense. Neither the Gospel of Mark, which in this respect at least abides most faithfully by the old apostolic tradition, nor that of John, says a word about Bethlehem or the miraculous birth. The congregation of Jerusalem to

¹ 2 Samuel xxiv. 1-9, and vol. ii. ch. iv. p. 26.

² See pp. 36, 39.

³ Luke ii. 27.

⁴ Luke ii. 41-48.

⁵ Matthew xiii. 55.

⁶ Luke iv. 22; John i. 46, vi. 42; see, however, Luke iii. 23.

which Mary and the brothers of Jesus belonged,¹ and over which the eldest of them, James, presided,² can have known nothing of it; for the later Jewish-Christian communities, the so-called Ebionites, who were descended from the congregation of Jerusalem, called Jesus the son of Joseph. Nay, the story that the Holy Spirit was the father of Jesus must have risen among the Greeks, and not among the first believers, who were Jews, for the Hebrew word for *spirit* is of the feminine gender. The Ebionites, therefore, called the Holy Spirit the mother and not the father of Jesus.

Only think! If the birth of Jesus had really taken place under such extraordinary circumstances, announced by a messenger from heaven, and hymned in mortal ears by a "great company of the heavenly host," how would it have been possible that every trace of such wonders should have disappeared, that they should all have passed away, and left no recollection after them? Yet this takes place according to the Gospel; for not only is the general public entirely ignorant of these events (though the news must have spread like fire through the land, especially when the Messianic expectation was at such a height), but his own family show beyond a doubt that they had not the faintest conception of the lofty significance of the personality of Jesus. This would be inconceivable were the story genuine history. If his parents fail to understand him when he says, at twelve years old, that he must be in his Father's house;³ if he himself afterwards declares that he finds no faith among his nearest relatives;⁴ if he exalts his faithful disciples above his unbelieving mother and brothers;⁵ above all, if Mary and her other sons put down his prophetic enthusiasm to insanity,⁶ — then the untrustworthy nature of these stories of his birth is absolutely certain. If even a little of what they tell us had been true, then Mary at least would have believed in Jesus, and would not have failed so utterly to understand him.

But when once we are convinced that the story is not genuine history, its emblematic meaning comes out clearly. It embodies a poetical conception and description of the person and the lot of Jesus, and foreshadows his life and work in a few bold lines and significant contrasts. Let us glance

¹ Acts i. 14.

² Acts xxi. 18; Galatians ii. 9, 12.

³ Luke ii. 50.

⁴ Matthew xiii. 57 (Mark vi. 4).

⁵ Matthew xii. 48-50 (Mark iii. 33-35).

⁶ Mark iii. 21.

at the main figures. In the foreground stand Augustus and Jesus,—the proud Emperor of Rome, who holds sway over the world by force of arms, and the lowly son of man, the truth of whose preaching, the power of whose spirit, and whose self-sacrificing love exact submission from all men. But there is another special reason for the introduction of Augustus. The first disciples of Jesus, Jews by birth and attached to Judaism heart and soul, believed, in their narrow national pride, that the Christ was the special possession of Abraham's chosen seed. They were jealous of their supposed privileges, and barred the entrance to the kingdom of the Christ against all who were not Israelites, unless they would first go over to Judaism. Our story enters a protest against this idea, for the imperial decree to take a census of all the world is carried out at the very time of the birth of Jesus, who is thus represented as a citizen of the world, belonging to all mankind, and not to Israel alone; the deliverer not only of his special people, but of all his brothers over the whole earth. Is not that a noble thought? And look again what deep and true feeling pervades the legend. For him, the great bearer of salvation, a brilliant career is surely held in store, and the world will give him a glorious welcome? Alas, no! There is no room for his parents; no room even for Mary, much as she needs it, in the inn. When Jesus comes into the world there is not a creature to give him a thought, or to help to supply his wants; and he is cradled in a manger. It is the foreshadowing of a life of bereavement. He will never rest, never find a home, not so much as a place in which to lay his head, until, beset and persecuted on every side, the victim of the world's fierce hatred, laden with its scornful curses, he drops his wearied head upon the cross in eternal rest! But though he comes without external display, though he bears no trace of earthly splendor, and though the superficial world sees nothing in the son of the carpenter of Nazareth to mark him off from others, yet this event that earth passes by unnoticed is celebrated with intensest joy and brightest radiance in heaven. Contrasting with the deep poverty within is the message and the song of angels without; and this sharp contrast sums up, as it were, the whole life of Jesus,—humble in his earthly lot, majestic in his moral grandeur; without material power, but mighty in the spirit; despised by the world, but glorified by God. The blessed tidings are brought to humble shepherds, not to the great and wise, -- for Jesus himself bestowed small care upon the

great ones of the earth, and was almost always thinking of the poor and simple “peoples of the land.” It was his ambition to befriend the people and console the poor. And what a wealth of noble thoughts is crowded into the angelic song itself! For the sake of this child of man God rejoices in mankind; he who is to establish the kingdom of peace upon earth has come. Surely his birth, with all its results of unutterable glory, should wake songs of praise and thanksgiving to God in hearts overwhelmed with thankful joy!

In what a clear and beautiful light this picture places all that Jesus may be to us! What artistic beauty, what deep symbolic truth pervades it! In it the Christians of the olden time tried to reproduce their own thoughts and feelings about Jesus; and the legend is the visible expression of their veneration and gratitude towards him. And though we should choose other forms in which to express our reverence for Jesus, we can fully share the affection and can rival the gratitude that inspired this old legend. It is a declaration of faith in Jesus made by the apostolic age; it is a glowing testimony to the high honor which Jesus has a right to claim, to the fulfilment in him of the hope which the noblest of our race had cherished, to the restoration in his person of the honor of human nature, of faith in human worth, and in man’s calling to spotless holiness. As such we can accept it and rejoice in it with all our hearts. Indeed, when we consider it rightly, this sweet old legend of the birth of Jesus, with all its wondrous beauty, gains a fresh charm for us when it ceases to rank as history.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

LUKE II. 21-39.

“WHEN the time appointed by God had come, he sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the Law.” In these words the Apostle Paul¹ describes the birth of Jesus as that of an ordinary man,² and, what is more, an ordinary Israelite. We too often forget that Jesus was an Israelite, not only by birth and education, but in his whole

¹ Galatians iv. 4.

² Compare Job xiv. 1; Matthew xi. 11.

style of thought, speech, and life ; that his conception of the universe and his own individual character unmistakably bore the Israelitish stamp, and that he can only be rightly understood and fully appreciated when this fact is borne in mind. It is often difficult to remember this, for Jesus had risen, at the price of many an effort and many an internal conflict, far above the one-sidedness, the narrowness, the pride, all the faults in short that characterized his people. But we must try never to lose sight of the fact that he still remained a thorough Israelite.

Luke calls attention to it at the outset, by telling us that the parents of Jesus scrupulously fulfilled their religious duties, and faithfully observed the injunctions of the Law with respect to their child.¹ On the eighth day after his birth the ceremony of circumcision was performed ; and at the same time he received his name.

Both Matthew and Luke find something very remarkable in the name *Jesus*. They say that the new-born child received this name at the command of God as Israel's future deliverer.² But the fact is that this name, which is pronounced in Hebrew *Yezua*, and is sometimes Grecized into *Jason*, was very common. After the Captivity it occurs quite frequently, and is interchanged with the name *Joshua*. Indeed *Joshua*, the successor of Moses, is called *Jesus* in the New Testament more than once,³ though the meaning of the two names is not really quite the same. We know of a *Jesus*, son of *Sirach*, a writer of proverbs, whose collection is preserved among the apocryphal books of the Old Testament. The notorious *Barabbas*, or *son of Abbas*, was himself called *Jesus*. Among Paul's opponents we find a magician called *Elymas*, the son of *Jesus*. Among the early Christians a certain *Jesus*, also called *Justus*, appears. Flavius Josephus mentions more than ten distinct persons — priests, robbers, peasants, and others — who bore the name of *Jesus*, all of whom lived during the last century of the Jewish state. But we need not be surprised to find the Evangelists laying such stress upon the name, for the narratives of the Old Testament have taught us that the Israelites thought much more of names than we do ; for we hardly ever think of their meaning, and in most cases do not so much as know what it is. The Israelites, on the other hand, saw in the meaning of every great man's name a prophecy of

¹ Luke ii. 21, 22, 23, 24, 39, 41.

² Matthew i. 21; Luke i. 31.

³ Acts vii. 45; Hebrews iv. 8; compare Nehemiah viii. 17.

his character, his fortunes, or something that specially concerned him. Thus they inverted the real order of things, for in reality it was not the name which described the man by anticipation, but the man whose brilliant services conferred a special significance upon the name which he happened to bear. If Joseph and Mary, instead of calling their child Jesus, had happened to give him the name of Solomon (= Frederick), David (= Gottlieb) or Isaiah (= Godhelp) what legends might not have been spun out of such suggestive names! In fact Matthew, if he had had the choice, would evidently have preferred Immanuel (= God is with us) to Jesus.¹

Now the name Jesus means *deliverance, safety, preservation*; or, perhaps, *deliverer, preserver*,² and is identical in meaning with the Greek expressions which occur in the New Testament, and are translated *salvation* and *saviour*. But unfortunately we have learned to associate these latter words with the life after death, and to think of the bliss of heaven when we use them; whereas the Greek expressions always refer to the Messianic kingdom, especially to preservation from the terrible judgments of God which were to precede the founding of the kingdom. In using the words *saviour* and *salvation*, therefore, we must remember that they simply mean *one who saves* or *delivers*, and *safety* or *deliverance*.

The Law declared that a mother who had given birth to a boy was unclean for seven days, and must separate herself or remain at home for thirty-three days after the circumcision. If the baby was a girl, both periods were doubled. All this time the mother must not touch any sacred thing or enter the temple. When these days were past she must make an offering of purification in the temple, consisting of a lamb of one year old for a burnt sacrifice, and a young pigeon or turtle-dove for a sin offering; or, if she was too poor to buy a lamb, she might take another dove instead. Besides all this, first-born sons must be taken to the temple when a month old and presented to the Lord, as it was called. They were then bought off or redeemed from him for five shekels, a sum about equal to twelve shillings, but since money was worth so much more in those days it would be equivalent to about twenty days' wages of a workman. To save trouble, this presentation was made at the same time as the sacrifice of purification.

¹ Matthew i. 23.

² Sirach xlvi. 1.

It is not quite certain that all these customs were observed after the birth of Jesus. Israelites who lived far from Jerusalem generally waited to make their offerings until one of the great feasts furnished a suitable occasion for visiting the temple, or even got a friend to make the offerings on their behalf. In the same way, the distance from Galilee to the capital often prevented the presentation of first-born sons in the temple; and, what is more, we have no sufficient grounds for supposing that Jesus was the eldest son of Joseph and Mary. But even supposing that all these regulations were strictly observed, and that Luke had the means of knowing it, he certainly would not have told us all the details unless he had had a special reason for doing so. That reason may be found in the following story.

On the fortieth day, says Luke, the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem to offer in the temple their two doves (the poor man's sacrifice), to present their son before the Lord, and to pay the price of redemption for him. Here a joyful surprise awaited them, similar to the one they had already experienced on the night of their baby's birth. In the Holy City dwelt a certain Simeon, a venerable old man (later traditions state that he was far more than a hundred years old), of perfect piety. He fervently longed for the coming of the Messianic kingdom, for the deliverance of Israel from sufferings and oppression; and God had revealed to him that he should see the Anointed of the Lord before he died. And now the Holy Spirit led him to the temple at the very moment that Joseph and Mary were entering the forecourt. In the lowly child of a few weeks old he at once discovered the future Messiah. His eyes gleamed with transport at the fulfilment of the fervent hope he had cherished so long, and, taking the little Jesus in his arms, he gave utterance to the thoughts that rushed upon him in the song of praise: —

Lord! now lettest thou thy servant depart,
According to thy word, in peace.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation
Which thou hast prepared before all peoples, —
A light of revelation to the heathen,
A glory for thy people Israel!

The father and mother listened in amazement to this inspired song in praise of their child; and the old man turned to them and blessed them. Then he spoke to Mary alone, and said, "Behold, this child is appointed in the counsel of God for the fall and the rise of many in Israel: to some he

shall be the cause of destruction, to others of salvation. Opposition and enmity will surround him, and, alas ! the sword will pierce through your heart too. . . . Why must all this be ? That the hearts of men may be laid bare as they are, and not as they seem."

Hardly had Simeon ended, when there came another to greet the child. It was the ancient prophetess Anna, a woman of wondrous piety, who had never consented to a second marriage though early left a widow, but was always in the temple, and was never weary of fasting and praying. She, too, praised God for this future deliverer of Israel, and spoke of him to all who hoped for the Messiah in Jerusalem.

Joseph and Mary now fulfilled the religious duties they had come to perform for their infant, and then left the temple with their hearts full of the two glorious and unexpected testimonies they had received. They were naturally anxious to go home again ; so they did not return to Bethlehem, where there was nothing now to keep them, but started at once on their journey to Galilee, and arrived without further adventures at their home in Nazareth.

It is a beautiful picture of the aged Simeon and Anna with the tender little baby and the astonished and delighted parents all gathered in the house of God ! But it is out of the question to regard it as genuine history. We need not say much on this point. The supernatural revelation said to have been vouchsafed to Simeon, his miraculous guidance to the temple at the right moment, his recognition of the child, and foreknowledge of what was in store for him, are of course incredible. Many years afterwards, when contrary to all expectations, including those of Jesus himself, his lot had proved so bitter ; when opposition to him had caused the fall of Scribes and Pharisees ; when faith in him had been a resurrection to publicans and sinners ; when his fearful death had sent a two-edged sword through his mother's heart (have you ever studied the Mater Dolorosa, or " Mary at the Cross," the companion picture of the Ecce Homo, or " Behold the man" ?) ; when this catastrophe had sifted the Israelites, and shown that many who were outwardly pious were inwardly proud and obstinate, while many seemingly abandoned outcasts were saved through penitence and faith, — then this prophecy was put into the mouth of Simeon. To invent a prophecy when the event it predicts has already taken place is a common practice in the Old and New Testaments, and

is not even yet abandoned. Again, the Evangelist unconsciously contradicts himself. How can he say that the parents of Jesus were surprised at what they heard about their child? After the message of Gabriel, and the song of angels hard by Bethlehem, nothing ought to have astonished them. Indeed, Simeon and Anna might very well have learned about the birth of the Messiah from rumors of the vision to the shepherds. It is evident, then, that this story is not drawn from the same source that supplied the legends of the birth, and this is made still clearer by the fact that Joseph is here called the father of Jesus. Lastly, the difficulty urged against the story of the birth holds good here also. It is impossible to reconcile this double salutation with what we know of the after life of Jesus. If he had been greeted as the Messiah when a baby he could not have remained in obscurity, and his family, especially his mother, would have been prepared for all that happened, and could not have refused to believe in him.

How did the legend rise, then? it may naturally be asked. Well, it was a poetical creation of the faith of the primitive Christians. In the first place, we recognize in these lines the joyful cry of a heart overwhelmed with gratitude to God for the birth of Jesus. The "comforter"—a name which the Rabbis, too, sometimes apply to the Messiah—had come at last, after all their misery! Their eyes had seen him, their hands had touched him, their ears had heard his heavenly words. That for which the fervent longing of devout Israelites in every age had yearned, the hope which even as a distant prospect had made the ancient seers burst into sacred joy, and had supported many a generation through the bitterness of disappointment and humiliation,—all this was now realized, imperfectly as yet, but no less certainly, in their very midst! Blessed were the eyes that might see what they saw! For, verily, many prophets and righteous men had longed for it in vain, with a life-long yearning.¹ For this blessing the Christians thanked God in transports of holy joy. Salvation had come, the light had risen, a guiding star to the heathen,² and an immortal glory to Israel! Now they could die in peace!

This triumphant gratitude is expressed under the characters of Simeon and Anna, the noblest representatives of Israel, a man and a woman led and inspired by the Holy Spirit; and it is a finely conceived and profoundly significant trait in the

¹ Luke x. 23, 24 (Matthew xiii. 16, 17).

² Isaiah xlvi. 6, xlix. 6.

legend, which makes these aged representatives of the departing generation raise the song of praise over the infant. It was but a small beginning (hardly even a beginning yet) of the fulfilment of the promises and expectations. So, too, the Christians, in the midst of whom the legend rose, had not yet seen the kingdom of God. It would only come when Jesus returned from heaven. But what of that? Had they not already received a pledge of it that left no room for doubt? Nay, he whose person was far more than a mere pledge had already come, and in him they had seen the great salvation, as it were, already with them. No wonder, then, that they sang songs of praise.

But this joyous exultation did not prevent their bowing their heads in pensive thought. What had not Jesus experienced at the hands of his people! How was it possible? Why was it needful? We trace the hand of a master in the picture of the hoary Simeon bending over the child as he lay in the unconscious slumber of infancy, and uttering the prophecy of the fierce opposition he was to encounter, and his mother's bitter grief at the cruel fate that would overtake him. Even in sin, the Israelite recognized the commandment or the work of God, the execution of his counsel,¹—and even the rejection of Jesus must have been decreed by him.² It was a sad necessity, without which the varnish could not be wiped from hypocrisy, and without which sin that took the guise of piety could not be compelled to expose itself. By its hatred of the holy servant of God, it passed sentence on itself.³

And here we may remark that this judgment, this sifting of the good from the bad in accordance with the attitude they assume towards Jesus, is still going on, and Jesus is still the cause of this man's fall and that man's resurrection, although in our time, when his name has been universally adopted, we cannot trace the process so distinctly. For Jesus brought a new principle of moral and religious life into the world, and no one can remain indifferent to him, or to the new and holy spirit which went out from him. Consciously or unconsciously we must all take sides. If we love not God or our neighbor, if we choose to live for ourselves alone,—for our own enjoyment, glory, and interest,—then we fight against Jesus, and are so much the worse and more wretched because he came. If we have depth of soul enough to understand, to love, to follow him, then we are guided by his principles, are helped

¹ E.g. Exodus ix. 12, x. 1, 20, 27; 2 Samuel xxiv. 7; Isaiah xlvi. 7
² Acts ii. 23, iv. 27, 28.

³ John iii, 19-21.

and hallowed by his spirit, and have him to thank for what we have become and what we are as moral beings.

God grant that our hearts may all of them be touched by Jesus more and more; that we, too, may be able to thank God for giving us some knowledge of him, that we may share those emotions of the early Christians which gave rise to this legend, and that the birth of Jesus may wake a song of joy in our hearts!

There is one more point to consider. Why do we celebrate the birth of Jesus on the 25th of December? What is the origin of our Christmas day?

You must know, in the first place, that it was not introduced at all till a comparatively late period. Days for the commemoration of the martyrdom of Stephen (26th December), and the Massacre of the Innocents (28th December), were fixed before that for the birth of Jesus. It is about the middle of the fourth century when we first come upon the celebration of Christmas at Rome. It may seem strange that the feast of Christmas was introduced into the Church so late, while those of Easter and Whitsuntide were observed from the very first; but, if we remember that Christianity sprang out of Judaism, we shall find the explanation we seek in the fact that there was no Jewish feast which could be Christianized into a celebration of the birth of Jesus. Moreover, the Church had a somewhat similar feast, that of Epiphany, of which we shall speak presently, at a much earlier period; and it was, therefore, a long time before any one thought of instituting a festival for the birth of Jesus. Ever since the end of the second century, however, people had been trying to discover upon what particular day Jesus had possibly or probably come into the world; and conjectures or traditions that rested upon absolutely no foundation led one to the 20th of May, another to the 19th or 20th of April, and a third to the 5th of January. At last, the opinion of the community at Rome gained the upper hand, and the 25th of December was fixed upon.

There was a double reason for selecting this day. In the first place, it had been observed from a hoary antiquity as a heathen festival, following the longest night of the winter solstice, and was called "the Birthday of the Unconquerable Sun." It was a fine thought to celebrate on that day the birth of him whom the Gospel¹ called "the light of the world;"

¹ John viii. 12, ix. 5.

that is, the sun of humanity, whose rise had been preceded by the long and fearful night of sin and ignorance, and whose coming had shed light and warmth and life over the hearts of men! A certain preacher even went so far as to say that "Christ himself chose the 25th of December for his birthday on this very ground!" The second reason was, that at Rome the days from the 17th to the 23d of December were devoted to unbridled merrymaking. These days were called the Saturnalia, after the god Saturnus, whose memory is still retained in the name of the seventh day of our week. These Saturnalia were consecrated to the memory of the Golden Age, which the heathen placed in the far-off past. All business was suspended, the freest hospitality was exercised, and public and private rejoicings were universal. All distinctions of rank and position were forgotten, and masters and slaves sometimes even changed places! In the Roman carnival and some of our Christmas customs the remains of the Saturnalia may still be traced. Now the Church was always anxious to meet the heathen, whom she had converted or was beginning to convert, half-way, by allowing them to retain the feasts they were accustomed to, only giving them a Christian dress, or attaching a new and Christian signification to them.¹ And in the Saturnalia, apart from the licentiousness that disfigured them, the Church must have found much that was attractive. Had not Jesus abolished the slavery of sin, superseded the distinction between class and class by the spirit of brotherly love, and brought in the Golden Age of peace with God?

Such were the thoughts which the Christians expressed in their Christmas festivities; and even now Christmas is the happiest festival of all the year. The very season helps to heighten the attractiveness of its warm and home-like customs. Our heathen forefathers, the Germans, had a somewhat similar feast called Yule, after the shortest day of the year. At this feast agreements were renewed, the gods were consulted as to the future, sacrifices were made to them, and the time was spent in jovial hospitality. Many features of this festival, such as burning the Yule-log on Christmas-eve, still survive among us. In Germany, the birthday of the child Jesus is made a children's festival; and it is to Germany that we owe the Christmas trees, now so common in England. In Holland, the children's festival is held on St. Nicholas's day, the 6th of December, corrupted into Sinterklaas, and by

¹ See vol. i. pp. 103-107.

us into Santa Claus ; so that in making Santa Claus bring the Christmas presents we have mixed up the two distinct festivals.

In German, Christmas is called *Weihnachten* or Holy Night, because it was the practice of the early Church, and of the Middle Ages, as it still is of the Roman Catholics, to celebrate more especially the *night before* the 25th of December, since, according to Luke, Jesus was born in the night. In English, it is simply called Christmas ; that is, the *mass* or religious service held in honor of Christ.



CHAPTER V.

THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST.

MATTHEW II.

WE must now put entirely out of our minds all those wondrous events which Luke so elaborately describes as calling attention to Jesus at the time of his birth, or shortly afterwards ; for we are to return to the first Gospel, which does not make the slightest allusion to them, and indeed excludes every thing that could possibly have called attention to Mary's son, or spread a rumor that the Messiah was born. Joseph and his wife, then, were citizens of Bethlehem.¹ Joseph had indeed been intrusted by an angel with the secret of the divine origin of Jesus ; but of course the public had nothing to do with the matter, as it was not a thing to publish abroad. Alas ! the people of Bethlehem would too soon be compelled to think of their little fellow-townsman, and to regard it as a fatal distinction that he had been born among them.

Two years had not passed when an event occurred which threw the neighboring Jerusalem into a fever of excitement. Certain strangers from the East, belonging to the distinguished order of the *magi*—that is to say the priests and astronomers—had come to the city, and had immediately asked where they could find the infant king of the Jews. They said that many months ago they had marked the appearance of a new and marvellous star in the heavens, and

¹ See p. 40.

by the rules of their art it showed infallibly that a great ruler had been born among the people of the Jews. Upon this they had set out to come and pay their homage to him, and had naturally expected to find him in the capital.

But at Jerusalem no one knew any thing about it. It was evident that neither the reigning prince nor any of his sons was meant. So far was this from being the case that when the news reached Herod he was thrown into the utmost terror, for he and all the city understood that it must be the Messiah whose birth had been announced in the heavens. His own throne therefore, or at least his dynasty, was on the brink of ruin. What was he to do? Might not a bold stroke avert the danger yet?

He called the Sanhedrim together, hoping that the learned men might tell from the study of the Scripture where the Messiah would be born. He was not disappointed, for, on the authority of the prophecies of Michah, they indicated Bethlehem as the appointed place.

Herod, who believed as firmly as any one else in the truth of astrology, the authority of the prophets, and the interpretation of the learned Scribes, had soon matured his treacherous and murderous plan. Secretly (for the affair had made only too much noise already) he summoned the magi into his presence and made the closest inquiries as to the time at which they had first seen the star, for fear that some accident might prevent their return to Jerusalem with more definite news. Then he urged them to go to Bethlehem, to search out the child without delay and without error, and bring back word to him. He would then go himself, he said, and bow down in homage before the child whom so great a future awaited. The magi, suspecting nothing, made the required promise, and went on their way. According to the usual custom of the East they travelled by night. What was their surprise and delight to see the star once more shining in the sky! They had not seen it since they had left their own country. And now, wonderful to say, it went before them from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, the surest guide that they could have, and when they reached the little city it stood still over one of the houses there! They did not need to ask for any further information now! They had found what they were seeking. They knocked at the door, and when they entered Joseph's house, there was the baby lying on its mother's breast! In a transport of joy and reverence they threw themselves upon the ground, and paid

such homage as it was customary in those districts to render to a king ; and, since it was not usual to enter into the royal presence empty-handed, they produced the little caskets of treasure that they had brought with them, and made their offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The object of their journey was accomplished. But it was itself the cause of the utmost danger to the life of the child. Providence, however, did not sleep. In a dream the magi received the divine command not to return by Jerusalem or tell Herod the result of their search ; and in obedience to this injunction they returned by another way to their fatherland. In itself this could only delay for a time the danger which it could not avert ; but in the very night of their departure, as Joseph slept, he once more saw a messenger from heaven, who warned him of the wicked purposes of the king, and summoned him to rise at once and flee with all haste to Egypt with the little Jesus and Mary. There he could remain for the present in safety from the tyrant. There was no time to lose. Joseph rose from his bed, and the “ holy family ” set out at once upon their flight.

Meanwhile Herod awaited the return of the magi in vain. Was it possible that they were mocking him ? Maddened by his disappointment, he despatched a band of soldiers to Bethlehem, with the ghastly order to butcher all the baby boys of two years old and under in the town itself and the surrounding houses or huts. He congratulated himself on having already discovered, from the calculations of the astrologers, that the child must have entered upon his second year, and he was determined to make sure of the death of so dangerous a rival. Not a single male child must be spared, and the murderers must close their ears against the cries of the mothers’ anguish. . . .

This was one of the last deeds of Herod’s reign. Not long afterwards he breathed his last, in frightful agonies, at the age of seventy. Once again an angel of God visited Joseph, now in Egypt, in a dream, and told him that the wretch who had sought to kill his foster-child was dead, and that he might now return with his family to his native land. Obedient now as always, he set out upon his journey at once, taking his wife and the boy with him. He intended, of course, to return to his own house in Bethlehem ; but on his way thither he heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father in the government of Judæa. As this prince was said to rival Herod himself in cruelty and superstition, Joseph per-

ceived that he would not be safe in his old abode. He was at a loss how to act; but now, as so often before, wisdom came to him by night, for he was directed in a vision from God to go to Lower Galilee, which lay in the district of Herod Antipas; and there he settled down in the lovely little city of Nazareth.

The brow of many a theologian has been bent over this narrative! For as long as people believed in the miraculous inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, of course they accepted every page as literally true, and thought that there *could* not be any contradiction between the different accounts or representations of Scripture. The worst of all such pre-conceived ideas is that they compel those who hold them to do violence to their own sense of truth. For when these so-called religious prejudices come into play, people are afraid to call things by their right names, and without knowing it themselves become guilty of all kinds of evasive and arbitrary practices; for what would be thought quite unjustifiable in any other cause is here considered a duty, inasmuch as it is supposed to tend toward the maintenance of faith and the glory of God! Those who speak out simply and clearly what they feel and see to be the truth are set down as proud, impious, and unbelieving. Let us see to it that we are never shaken in the sacred conviction that God cannot possibly be served by any thing against which our conscience protests! For it is not in the traditional articles of faith, but in the sense of truth and the sense of duty, which are both of them planted in our bosoms by nature, and can both be trained and strengthened,—it is there that God reveals himself to us.

The divine revelations or angelic visions during sleep, of which such prodigal use is made in this narrative, are in themselves enough to prevent our believing it. But in former times they seemed to present no difficulty. No more was any one disturbed by the fact that Joseph, who is kept entirely in the background in the third Gospel, is quite a prominent figure in the first. I may take this opportunity of remarking that Joseph, who is scarcely noticed again in any of the Gospels, came to be highly honored by the Christians of later centuries, and was glorified with especial zeal and enthusiasm in the East. The day of his death, which was fixed on the 20th of July, was celebrated with great splendor. In the fifth century a “History of Joseph the Carpenter”

was composed expressly for use on this occasion. It is still preserved among our Apocryphal Gospels, and represents Jesus as describing to his disciples the life and still more the death of his foster-father. The Catholic Church has enrolled him among the saints, records a host of miracles performed on his behalf, and honors him with the title of "Confessor and Patriarch." Indeed, a few years ago Pope Pius IX. commended the Church, under its trying circumstances, to St. Joseph's special protection.

But to return to our story and the difficulties that it presents. The task which the commentators thought it their duty to undertake in the interests of faith was three-fold. In the first place they had to reconcile Matthew and Luke. To take a single instance: At what point in the third Gospel were the visit of the magi and the flight to Egypt to be inserted? Not after the presentation in the temple; for immediately after that event Joseph and Mary went back to their home in Nazareth, and were therefore no longer to be found in Bethlehem. And yet not before; for the child was more than a year old at the visit of the magi, and the murderous plans of Herod would have made a subsequent presentation in the temple impossible. The fact is that there is no room at all for these events in the narrative of Luke, which represents the birth of the Messiah as having been already proclaimed widely enough by the shepherds and by Simeon and Anna. The second difficulty refers to this wonderful star. In ancient times the Jews, like other peoples, might very well believe that there was some immediate connection between the stars and the life of man,—an idea which we still preserve in the forms of speech, that so and so was born under a lucky or under an evil star. They might therefore suppose that the birth of great men, such as Abraham for instance, was announced in the heavens. In our century however, if not before, all serious belief in astrology has ceased, and it would be regarded as an act of the grossest superstition for any one to have his horoscope drawn; for the course, the appearance, and the disappearance of the heavenly bodies have been long determined with mathematical precision by science. But if this is the case, it is impossible that the magi could have been apprised of the birth of the great King of the Jews by the rise of a new star. And yet the commentators, in their efforts to rescue the credit of this story, have searched the heavens with the utmost diligence, have talked of the conjunction of two planets, and

have even called to their aid a certain comet that was observed in China! But, unfortunately, the phenomenon that Matthew describes is very different from either a conjunction or a comet. And however much these harmonizers might congratulate themselves on their discovery, one does not quite see how a star in the heavens could point out the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, advance in front of the travellers, and stand still over one particular house! This is so utterly absurd that it cannot even be accounted for as an optical delusion. The third point of difficulty is presented by the slaughter of the innocents. Not, indeed, that Herod was incapable of such a hideous crime, but the hopeless stupidity with which he is represented as having gone to work is quite inconsistent with his well-known craftiness. He summons the magi secretly, as if on purpose to arouse their suspicions; he is afraid that they will not return, and yet sends no one to observe them; he gives orders, in his senseless fury, for a wholesale massacre, when he could easily have discovered, in so small a place, the particular house and child that had been honored by so distinguished a visit; he does not even so much as inquire whether the child he is looking for, and against whom his orders are directed, may not have escaped already. Moreover, Josephus, who gives us a minute account of the atrocities perpetrated by Herod up to the very last moments of his life, does not say a single word about this unheard of crime, which must have been so notorious. Surely he must have known of it, and must have mentioned it, had it ever been committed!

I will not delay you by enumerating the devices, sometimes very ingenious but always futile, by which ancient and modern commentators have endeavored to escape these difficulties. You must have already discovered the true character of this scene. The Christians drew it in accordance with the indications they believed to be contained in the Old Testament, under the form of direct prophecies or foreshadowing types. The writer of the legend of Balaam¹ had sung of "a star that rises from Jacob," by which he meant a glorious monarch, and, specifically, Jeroboam II. But in later times his words were taken to mean that the coming of the Messiah would be heralded by a star. Thus in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, a hundred years after the death of Jesus, a certain Jew who gave himself out as the Messiah

¹ Numbers xxiv. 17. See vol. ii. chap. xviii. p. 199.

and headed the last great insurrection of his countrymen, assumed the name of Bar-Cochbah,—“son of a star.” As recently as in the fifteenth century of our era, a Jewish scholar named Abarbanel (A.D. 1463) concluded that the birth of the Messiah was close at hand, because there was a conjunction of two planets in the sign of the Zodiac called the Fishes (Pisces), which Abarbanel held to be closely connected with the fates of Israel! At the birth of Moses, he says, the same phenomenon occurred. Again, the Christians read in the Prophet and the Psalmist¹ that the princes of the heathen would come to the light of Israel with presents of gold and frankincense, and bow down in reverence before the great King. If Jesus was the Christ, then all this must have been fulfilled in him.

But there was more. Antiquity in general delighted in representing great men, such as Romulus, Cyrus, and many more, as having been threatened in their childhood by fearful dangers. This served to bring into clear relief both the lofty significance of their future lives and the special protection of the deity who watched over them. The Christians were familiar with a striking example of this kind of legend in the story of Moses. As Josephus tells the tale,² his life, together with that of all the male infants of about his age, was threatened by Pharaoh on account of the prediction of a priest that “at that time a child should be born among the Israelites who should humble Egypt and exalt his own people.” Later on, again, he had to fly from the court for his life. And inasmuch as Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant, is constantly brought into comparison with Jesus as the mediator of the New,³ it followed that the experiences of the former were to be regarded as a foreshadowing type of the lot of the latter. Jesus, no less than Moses, must be “the child of Providence.” Indeed, the writer of the narrative in the second chapter of Matthew had his attention so closely fixed upon Moses that he puts into the mouth of the angel who addresses Joseph the very words which Yahweh was said to have uttered to Moses.⁴ Even in later times the Church had not forgotten the meaning of the slaughter of the innocents of Bethlehem. Thus Prudentius, a poet of the fourth century, sang in his “Hymn for Epiphany”:

¹ Isaiah xlix. 7, lx. 3–10; Psalm lxxii. 10, 11.

² See vol. ii. p. 250

³ E.g. Hebrews iii. 1–6, viii., ix.; 2 Corinthians iii. &c.

⁴ Compare Matthew ii. 20 with Exodus iv. 19.

What profit on that fatal day ?
 What gain from Herod's deed of dread ?
 Alone among the crowd of dead
 In safety Christ is borne away !

• • • •

So from the wicked Pharaoh's face
 Escaped, despite the fell decree,
 Type of the Christ that was to be, —
 Moses, restorer of his race !

So, too, the Old Testament was supposed to indicate that the Christ must retire to Egypt in order to come back again. For Israel itself, often called *God's son*, or *God's first-born*,¹ was the type of the Messiah, the Son of God. So the Christ too, like Israel, must have been in Egypt, and what was written of Israel, “Out of Egypt have I called my son,”² must actually apply to Jesus also. Lastly, the wail of sorrow raised over the inhabitants of Judah carried away in captivity to Babylon was actually forced into a prophecy of the murder at Bethlehem.³

But the whole scene, while typifying the fulfilment in Jesus of the hope of the fathers, prefigured in the history and oracles of Israel and the lives of its heroes, is also a prophetic forecast of the fate of Jesus himself, of the reception which his gospel would meet, and the significance of his person to the world. The sword hangs over him, even as a child, by a silken thread, and so will dangers ever surround him on all sides ; so will the powers of the world ever conspire against his flock. But as God's eye keeps watch over the helpless babe, so shall no one lay a hand on him until his hour is come ;⁴ so shall Providence watch over the Church of Christ. Opposed to these distinguished heathen who come from distant lands to bow down before Jesus stands Herod, with Jerusalem's citizens, her priests and her Scribes, at his side,⁵ shrinking from no enormity in his attempt to crush the Christ. Even so shall the heathen, with their longing for salvation, their eagerness for the gospel, their faith and their reverence, stand out in sharpest contrast against the blind and stubborn hostility of the Jewish nation. These sages from the East who fall prostrate before the child are the first-fruits of the countless host who shall bend the knee in his name,⁶ so that the

¹ Exodus iv. 22; Jeremiah xxxi. 9.

² Hosea xi. 1.

³ Matthew ii. 17, 18. Compare Jeremiah xxxi. 15.

⁴ John vii. 30, viii. 20. ⁵ Matthew ii. 3, 4. ⁶ Philippians ii. 10.

very cradle of Jesus prophesies of the subjection of all the heathen world to him.

It is upon this last point that the tradition of the Church has laid the greatest stress. As if instinctively feeling that the story was a legend, and might therefore be treated with perfect freedom, it has not exactly elaborated the narrative of Matthew, but has modified it and made it more definite. The magi were changed, in accordance with a passage in the Old Testament,¹ into kings, and their number fixed at three, to correspond with the three presents ; their names were said to be Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar, and each was made the representative of one of the three quarters of the world known to the ancients. The youngest of them, as the representative of Africa, was always represented as a Moor. In their gifts, too, some of the church-Fathers, even as early as the third century, find a symbolical significance. Jesus received the gold as king, the frankincense as God, and the myrrh as man, in anticipation of his martyr's death. Thus the poet Juvenus (about A.D. 300) says in a line of his Gospel History :—

“ Gold, frankincense, and myrrh, to the King, the God, the Man ! ”

There is certainly something in the whole story that stimulates the curiosity and leaves the imagination free to work. The star is described to us by one of the Apostolic Fathers² as “ excelling all the stars in brilliance, of indescribable glory, and astonishing every one by its novelty. All the other heavenly bodies, with the sun and moon, made a circle round it, but it poured its light over them all.” In the course of time it was related that the magi came from Persia to Bethlehem in consequence of the predictions of Zoroaster, the founder of their religion, that they were led to the place by an angel in the form of a star, and received a gift from Mary, which they gratefully accepted in return for their presents. This gift was one of the cloths in which the child had been swaddled ; and when they came back to their own country they kindled a fire (the Persians reverence fire as divine) and threw the cloth into it. But it would not burn, so they preserved it with the utmost reverence among their treasures.

Two Apocryphal Gospels, that of the “ Infancy of the Redeemer,” in use among the Nestorians of Syria, in which the story just given occurs, and the Latin “ History of Mary's Birth and the Childhood of the Redeemer,” are particularly full in

¹ Psalm lxxii. 10; Isaiah xl ix. 7.

² See p. 22.

their accounts of the journey to Egypt and the sojourn there. The “Infancy” makes it three years long, whereas the “History of Joseph” only makes it one year. All sorts of wonders take place, such as the healing of a demoniac boy, of two women possessed by devils, of a deaf and dumb bride, of a leprous girl, a leprous prince, and a young man who had been turned into a mule. At the arrival of Jesus in Egypt the idols fall prostrate,¹ robbers fly from him, dragons, lions, and panthers do homage to him.

Would you like to have a specimen of this literature? Here is one from the Gospel of “Mary’s Birth and the Childhood of the Redeemer:”—

“On the third day of their journey from Bethlehem, Mary was exhausted by the heat of the sun in the wilderness. Seeing a tree she said to Joseph, ‘Let us rest ourselves in its shadow.’ Joseph led her to the spot at once, and helped her to get down from the ass. When she had seated herself she looked up into the foliage of the palm, which was laden with fruit, and said to Joseph, ‘I should so like to taste the fruit, if only I could.’ But Joseph answered, ‘How can you think of such a thing? You see yourself how high up the branches are. No! what I’m concerned about is the water. We have used up all our store, and we shall not have another chance of filling the skins and refreshing ourselves.’

“Then the child Jesus, sitting on the lap of his mother the Virgin Mary, said with a joyous countenance, ‘Bow down your branches, O tree, and refresh my mother with your fruit!’ Immediately the tree bowed down its head to Mary’s feet, and they all of them took of its fruit and ate their fill. Still the tree bowed down, waiting the command of Jesus to rise up again. And Jesus said, ‘Palm-tree, rise up, be strong, and share the lot of the trees that are in the paradise of my Father! But open out from your roots a spring that is hidden in the ground, that water may flow out of it to refresh us.’ Immediately the tree rose up, and streams of pure, cold, beautiful water poured from its roots. Then they rejoiced and refreshed themselves completely both man and beast, and they thanked God.

“The next day, when they set out on their journey again, Jesus turned to the tree and said, ‘Palm-tree! it is my will that one of your branches be transplanted into my Father’s paradise by one of my angels. And this is the blessing I pronounce on you: To all who have conquered in the good

¹ Compare Isaiah xix. 1.

fight it shall be said: You have reached the palm of victory.'

" Hardly had he uttered the words, when behold ! an angel of the Lord appeared, standing above the tree, and took one of its branches and flew with it up into heaven. And Joseph and Mary were overcome with deadly fear ; but Jesus said, ' Why do you fear ? Know you not that this palm-branch, which I have had taken to paradise, shall be a joy to all the saints, even as it has been a joy to you in this wilderness?'"

But what shall we say to the Egyptian village of Matarea, in which they still show you a sycamore tree that is said to have opened when Mary and Jesus were pursued by robbers ! It took them in, and then closed up again. When the robbers were out of sight it split in two once more, and remained in that condition until the year 1656 A.D., when a great piece of the trunk fell off.

We may mention here that the Talmud also makes Jesus go to Egypt, not it would seem in imitation of our narrative, but because it ascribes skill in sorcery to him, and Egypt was regarded as the land of sorcerers.

It is hardly necessary to contrast the simplicity, the beauty, and the deep significance which mark the legend of Matthew with these senseless stories from the Apocryphal books. The difference must strike every one.

A word in conclusion on the well-known feast of Epiphany, or Twelfth Night, sometimes called on the continent "The feast of the Three Kings," which is held on January 6. Epiphany means the appearance or manifestation of a deity. The feast was instituted at an early period in the Eastern Church in commemoration of the baptism of Jesus, because he was supposed to have assumed his divine dignity on that occasion.¹ Towards the end of the third century the feast began to be celebrated in other quarters in commemoration both of the baptism of Jesus, when he was made known to the world and appeared in public,² and of his birth. When, in the course of time, December 25 was set aside³ to commemorate this last event, Epiphany was still consecrated in the East to the baptism of Jesus, but in the West it was set apart to commemorate the visit of the Wise Men of the East, "the revelation of Christ as the redeemer to the heathen world." This is another proof that the Church had not forgotten the meaning of the legend in Matthew.

¹ See pp. 40, 41.

² See pp. 36, 37, 43.

³ See p. 66.

CHAPTER VI.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE AT THE AGE OF TWELVE.

LUKE II. 40-52.

IT always wakes our keenest interest to know how a great man was brought up and educated, to see how from a helpless little creature, in no way distinguished from the ordinary children of men, he raised himself step by step to the height from which he commands such universal admiration ; to notice the special circumstances that have contributed to develop his gifts and powers, and to bring out his noble character in all its strength. From this point of view even the most trifling details acquire a peculiar interest. But seldom indeed are we permitted to witness this fascinating spectacle. As a rule the materials are very insufficient, and imagination has to fill in many a gap that even the most careful research has left.

Nothing could be more natural than the wish to learn something of the childhood and youth of Jesus. For in his case more than in any other we long for accurate information as to the circle in which he grew up, the circumstances by which he was surrounded, and which helped to make him so great, so unique among men ; in short, to hear in what way and under what influences his character, his intellect, and his affections were developed. Where his actual history opens, and he emerges from obscurity and begins the work of his life, he stands before us fully equipped, his many-sided nature already matured into that of a great, a noble, a mighty personality. Can we possibly succeed in penetrating here and there to the silent workings of his spirit, in gathering scattered traits to throw light on the circumstances of his bringing up, in tracing scattered indications of the course that was taken by his inner life, of the forces that were brought to bear upon him at a time when the mind is specially receptive, in discovering, at least to some extent, how and by what his glorious powers were so finely and so harmoniously developed ? We know what he was, and we cannot help asking how he became what we know him to have been.

With regard to this time of preparation, all our Gospels except that of Luke are profoundly silent. At the end of his

account of the birth of Jesus, Luke gives us a general description of his childhood in the words : “ He grew up and waxed strong and was filled with wisdom ; and the grace of God was with him ; ” and afterwards he thus describes his youth : “ Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men.” Between these notices he inserts an account of an event intended to bring out the great intellectual gifts and the earnest piety which distinguished Jesus even as a boy. The story runs as follows : —

The parents of Jesus were accustomed to visit the City of the Temple every Passover. The Law commanded every male Israelite to appear before the face of Yahweh at each of the three great feasts ;¹ but since this injunction could hardly be carried out completely by those who lived at a distance from Jerusalem, the most magnificent of Israel’s festivals was generally selected as the occasion of the journey to the temple. Women were not ordered by the Law to come up also, though some of the Rabbis thought their presence at the Passover desirable. But Mary’s pious heart urged her to accompany her husband. On these journeys the pilgrims joined to make up caravans ; and on their way they raised their voices in sacred song, and their hearts were filled with the thoughts suggested by the festival. The stay at Jerusalem itself, which extended over eight days, was a time of deep and sacred joy.

Of course, no little children would be taken on such a journey as that from Nazareth to the Holy City. But when Jesus was twelve years old he had sufficiently outgrown his childhood. The people of Eastern countries are grown up at a much earlier age than here ; and a boy of twelve was considered by the Jews capable of taking part in all the practices of religion, and was, therefore, called “ a son of the Law.” Jesus, then, was to accompany his parents on their journey for the first time in his life. What an event it was for him ! His high-wrought expectations were not disappointed. The very journey was so glorious ; the magnificence of the temple so imposing ; Jerusalem at such a time so grand and so full of life ; the Passover so splendid ! Everywhere the religious wants of the youthful Israelite’s heart found satisfaction, and the impressions he received could never be forgotten.

The days flew past, and Joseph and Mary set out upon their homeward journey. But Jesus stayed behind, unknown to them. When they missed him at the moment of their de-

¹ Exodus xxiii. 17; and elsewhere.

parture, they thought he must have started already with some other company of pilgrims from Nazareth, that might have left Jerusalem a few hours before. So they hastened on their journey that day, in hopes of overtaking the friends or relatives with whom they expected to find their son. But when they reached the first station at Shiloh, and came up with the caravan of the Nazarenes, they sought and inquired for the boy in vain. No one had seen him or knew where he was. Who can describe the feelings of the anxious parents? What could have become of him? How he would wander about in that huge city, in despair at not finding his parents! He was still so young, and Jerusalem was so great! They hurried back with the utmost speed. They made inquiries of the host, under whose roof they had spent the preceding week; but he could tell them nothing of the boy. They applied to every one they knew, but all in vain; for there was no one who could give them any news. They traversed the city in every direction, and hour by hour their distress increased. At their wits' end, after three days' search, they finally ascend the mount of the temple, pass through the outer buildings of the sanctuary, and to their inexpressible relief they see him in a lecture-room, or in the synagogue of the temple, sitting among the Rabbis! Thank God that they have found him! But how came he there? And what a child he is! He does not show the smallest sign of anxiety or fear. He seems completely at home amid his surroundings. His glowing cheek and kindling eye speak to the intensity of his interest. He catches every word that falls from the teachers, and hangs upon their lips as they argue together and discuss the knotty questions of the Law. And he himself, too simple-minded to be over-diffident, sometimes puts questions to them, for the free intercourse then customary between the teachers and the taught made it easy for him to do so; and when they asked him questions in their turn, his answers showed such grasp and penetration that all around were lost in amazement at his knowledge of religious things, and the early development of such wonderful powers.

Joseph and Mary looked on in amazement, and then made their way through the crowd that yielded them a passage, wondering to see them press into the inner circle. Did the boy fly to them as soon as he perceived their presence? Far from it! Mary, as she threw her arms about him and pressed a mother's kiss upon his forehead, could not restrain the gentle reproof: "My child, why have you caused us all this

pain? Your father and I have been seeking you throughout the city, with almost broken hearts!" But he answered quietly, as one who feels that his answer leaves no room for blame: "But, mother, why did you not come straight to the temple? Did you not know that I must be in my heavenly Father's house?"¹

They did not understand his words. The child had outgrown his parents. But, at any rate, they had found the dear one they had lost; and, without thinking of opposing them, without so much as asking leave to stay a little longer in the place he found so fascinating, Jesus followed them. Then they began their homeward journey in earnest; and neither then nor in after years as long as he remained beneath his parents' roof, did he ever fail in respect or obedience, or give them the smallest cause to complain of him. This event made a deep impression, especially upon Mary. When she thought it all over afterwards, she felt that some great destiny must surely be in store for her son.

No one can say that this story is impossible. The remarkable and early development of intellectual and religious power it is meant to illustrate is far from improbable. Similar traits have been observed in the childhood of far less mighty spirits than that of Jesus, and the Israelitish boys were well instructed in the Law. To take a single instance: Josephus tells us that when he himself was about fourteen years old his diligence was universally commended, and that the high priests and chief men of Jerusalem constantly came to him for exact information and guidance in cases of difficulty! This is doubtless an exaggeration, and a specimen of the historian's ridiculous vanity (excessive modesty was never one of his failings), but it shows at least that it was considered nothing unnatural for a mere boy to be a kind of authority on points of learning. Similar stories are told by other contemporaneous authorities of boys of ten, thirteen, and fourteen.

But, on further reflection, all sorts of difficulties occur to us, and throw great doubt upon the story. We can hardly understand the parents of Jesus being so careless as to set off without exactly knowing where he was; for the Evangelist evidently does not mean to imply any intentional disobedience on his part. And how unnatural is the conduct of the boy towards his parents! for Mary says they have been looking for him for "three days," and if this does not include the

¹ After an amended version.

journey to and from Shiloh, it must have been five days since he had seen them, and yet he evinces no delight when they meet again ! And where had he been all the time ? Not at his parents' former lodgings, or with acquaintances, for in that case Joseph and Mary would have heard of him at once ; not with any true friends, or they would have taken care to send him after his parents in suitable company. There are other difficulties, too. We find him in the midst of the Scribes. There is some ambiguity in the expression. Did he come to them as a pupil, or as one of themselves ? And we are struck at once by the prominence assigned to Mary, in this as in the earlier stories of Luke,¹ whereas in reality the father's authority was every thing among the Jews. Nor should we expect Jesus, in his thirteenth year, to speak of the temple as the house of *his Father*.

The story is hardly to be reconciled with the history of the birth of Jesus,² but of course that is nothing against it. It is somewhat suspicious, however, that the childhood of Jesus should be described in the same words as that of John.³ But our doubts rise higher when we begin to ask whence Luke, or his authority, derived the story. We cannot help suspecting that here, too, the desire to lift the veil that hung over the youth of Jesus made the later Christians fly to the traditions concerning the heroes of the Old Testament. Not to speak of the wonders reported of Moses, it is obvious that Samuel has served in some measure as the model for the story. In almost the words that Luke uses of Jesus it is said of Samuel : " He increased and grew, and was in favor with the Lord and with men." Samuel's mother, too, comes up to the sanctuary every year, and is a more prominent figure than her husband,⁴ just as Mary is here.⁵ And, lastly, we know from Josephus that Samuel was supposed " to have completed his twelfth year " when he experienced his prophetic call.⁶

We will not pronounce any very decided opinion, however. The story certainly rises in our estimation when we compare it with the later elaborations of the Apocryphal Gospels. In that of *Thomas* we are told that, after the party had started, Jesus secretly returned to Jerusalem ; that he silenced the elders and the teachers of the people by his questions ; that he himself expounded the most important parts of the Law and the similitudes of the Prophets ; and that the Scribes

¹ See p. 72. ² See pp. 56-58. ³ Compare Luke ii. 40 with i. 80.
⁴ 1 Samuel ii. 26, i. 21 ff., ii. 19. ⁵ See p. 55. ⁶ 1 Samuel iii.

and Pharisees congratulated Mary on being blessed with a child who had given such an unexampled proof of glorious virtue and wisdom. In the Gospel of the "Infancy of the Redeemer" we learn that Jesus disputed with the Rabbis as to the descent of the Messiah,¹ expounded the secrets of the Law and Prophets, explained to an astrologer and a student of physical science the secrets of their studies,—things which no created intellect had ever traced out, understood, or penetrated,—and thereby excited their wonder and even their adoration.

Indeed these Gospels, together with that of "Mary's Birth and the Childhood of the Redeemer," are full of extraordinary stories about the first twelve years of the life of Jesus. Most of them are foolish and some of them offensive stories; but we must not pass them by wholly unnoticed. One of them is this: That Jesus was once playing with companions of his own age, and they were all making clay animals, such as donkeys, cattle, and birds. Each of them boasted of his own productions, and said they were better than those of his companions. Then Jesus said to them, "I shall command the animals that I have made to walk about." The others said, mockingly, "Then you're the Creator's own son, are you?" But Jesus told his clay animals to walk or fly, to eat or to drink, and whatever he told them they did. When the children told their parents what had happened, their fathers warned them never to play with Jesus again, and to avoid his company; "for," said they, "he is a sorcerer." Another time his playfellows had hidden in an oven, and the women standing in front of the house, when questioned by Jesus, said that there were not any children there: there were only some little three-year old goats in the oven. Upon this Jesus really turned the boys into goats, and they came jumping out! But at the repeated prayers of the women he presently restored the children to their proper shapes again. One day as he was playing about with some other boys he passed by the workshop of a certain dyer of the name of Salem. A great many pieces of cloth belonging to different inhabitants of the place were lying there ready to be dyed in various colors. But when there was no one in the shop, Jesus ran in and threw all the pieces of cloth into the same dyeing pot. Just at that moment Salem came back, and seeing what had happened burst into cries of anger, and exclaimed indignantly to Jesus: "What have you been doing,

¹ From Matthew xxii. 41-46.

you son of Mary? See what mischief you have done to me and my fellow-citizens! for each of them wants the color that suits his taste, and here have you spoiled them all!" But the boy answered! "I will change the color of every piece of cloth that you want changed," and began to pull them one after another out of the pot; and behold! every one was just the color that the dyer wanted. When the Jews saw this miracle they glorified God.

Sometimes he had to help in the work of the house. For instance, once his mother sent him to draw water from the well. But when he had filled the pitcher and was drawing it up (or, according to another tradition, as he was carrying it through the crowd) it broke. Jesus instantly spread out his handkerchief (or his cloak), caught the water in it, and brought it to his mother. At *this* time he was six years old. In the month of October, when he was eight years old, his father went to sow his land with wheat, and Jesus went with him and sowed one single grain of wheat. Six months afterwards he reaped and threshed out the produce, and the grain of wheat had yielded a hundred homers (five hundred or a thousand bushels), which he distributed among the poor of the village. Sometimes he went with his father to work; and when Joseph, "who was rather a poor carpenter," had made any thing too long or too short, or too broad or too narrow, Jesus had only to put out his hand, and every thing was as it should be. For instance, when Joseph had made one of the legs of a couch for a rich man too short, Jesus stretched it out; and when the throne for the king at Jerusalem, at which Joseph had been working for two years, turned out to be short of the required dimensions by two spans each way, Jesus set it right.

He went to school under several masters, and astounded or enraged them all by his wonderful ability. Of course he would not condescend to be taught by any one. He cursed one master for striking him, and the teacher fell powerless upon the ground. Another, who had lifted his hand to strike him, was maimed and died.

He performed all manner of healings of the sick and raisings of the dead, and was especially active in restoring those that had been bitten by poisonous snakes; among others his father Joseph, and his brother James. The latter had met with the accident when sent to gather wood. Another time Jesus and his companions were playing at being kings. Jesus was the king, and the others had spread their clothes

upon the ground for him to sit upon, and had woven a crown of flowers to set upon his head. They themselves stood at his right and left, like the body-guard that surrounds a king. Whenever any one passed, the children dragged them to the throne, and said, "Come here and do homage to our king, and then you shall have a prosperous journey." By and by some people passed who were carrying a sick child with them. He had been to a mountain to gather wood, and there he had found a partridge's nest; but when he stretched out his hand to take the eggs he was bitten by a snake. He was now at the very point of death, and his friends were carrying him home. But when they came to the place where Jesus was playing, the children compelled them, in spite of their sorrow and in spite of their resistance, to approach the little king. As soon as Jesus heard what had happened he said to his companions, "Let us go and kill the snake." The parents, sorely against their will, were compelled to go with them. When Jesus ordered the snake to come out of its hiding place it obeyed him, and sucked the poison out of the wound again. Then Jesus cursed it, and it burst asunder, but the child got well again. On his beginning to cry, Jesus said, "Stop crying, for you will soon be my disciple." This boy was afterwards the Apostle, Simon the Canaanite.

This story shows a desire to bring into contact with Jesus, while he was still a boy, the people who were afterwards to be connected with him; and there are other tales of his childhood due to the same tendency. The son of Annas is cursed and dies, because when Jesus is making mud sparrows on the Sabbath he finds fault with him and spoils his play. Judas Iscariot is possessed by Satan when a child, and bites every one who comes near him, or even himself if he can get at no one else. His mother brings him to Mary to be cured, and when he is seated by the child Jesus, Satan falls upon him again and he bites Jesus in his right side; but at that very moment Satan rushes out of him in the form of a mad dog. This Judas afterwards betrayed his master, and the side which he had bitten was pierced by a Jewish lance.

Once when Jesus was coming home in the evening with Joseph a boy ran against him and knocked him down. Then the lord Jesus said to him, "As you have struck against me so shall you fall and never rise again." And that same hour the child fell down and died. On different occasions Jesus restored a dried fish to life, went into the den of a lioness,

passed dry-footed through the Jordan, whose waters parted for him, and did many other wonders.

But this is quite enough! No one will deny that these stories are absurd and often repulsive. But we have thought it worth while to notice them for several reasons. In the first place there is a painful interest, from a historical point of view, in seeing how Christian faith degenerated in the ancient Church, and in what kind of literature thousands of Christians, especially in the East, found delight and edification for centuries. Again, these stories show us the lengths to which invention could go, and the wild vagaries to which an unbridled imagination might lead; how little the true greatness of Jesus was kept in view, and how unnaturally the love of the marvellous distorted his image. And when once we have observed what such weaknesses may lead to in their exaggerated developments, we shall be very cautious and circumspect wherever the books of the New Testament itself betray the first beginnings of the same distortions and onesidedness; such as love of the marvellous, superstitious misapprehension of Jesus disguised under the form of increased reverence for him, and the tendency to call in the help of the imagination to fill up the gaps of history. We shall, therefore, unconditionally reject every thing, even in our canonical Gospels, which contradicts Nature, or is inconsistent with the humanity of Jesus.

There is yet another point of view from which these stories are not wholly without value. They give us a picture of Jesus playing with other children, going about with his brothers, helping in the house by fetching water, for instance, joining his father at his work, and so on. Thus they place him in real life and amid the surroundings of ordinary mortals. So too, the healthy intellectual and emotional development of Jesus, his "increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men," his obedience to his parents, and his early piety are the main points enforced by Luke in his two notices of the child Jesus and his story of the visit to the temple; and these must lie at the foundation of every attempt to form a true idea of his early life.

But what right have we to begin by laying down these two general facts,—that the early life of Jesus was in every other respect of a very ordinary kind, but that he kept his soul wonderfully pure and his intellect wonderfully bright? Our knowledge of his future life gives us a perfect right to make

both these assertions ; for, in the first place, his own family and his fellow-townspeople were utterly amazed at his appearance in public, and showed clearly enough that they had never seen any thing very remarkable in him, and had never expected any thing particular from him ; and, in the next place, Jesus afterwards displayed not only such judgment and knowledge as he could only have attained by profound reflection and strict self-discipline, but also an entire absence of that sense of guilt which, considering his keen moral perceptions, he could not have failed to experience had he ever soiled his character or his imagination by any serious trespasses.

But we need not rest in such general assertions. The accounts we have of his public life, and both the form and matter of his teaching, warrant us in drawing further conclusions as to what took place before he began his ministry. For when we listen to Jesus, the illustrations and parables which he uses serve, as it were, to lead us round through the scenes of his former life. Nothing escaped his observant eye, not even the most commonplace occurrences and occupations. Again, we are not without knowledge of the condition of his people and his country and the history of his times, and possess detailed descriptions of the natural scenery by which his home was surrounded. From all these materials we may, without quitting the ground of history, restore to some extent the surroundings among which he lived and the circumstances under which he grew up.

Galilee, in the southern portion of which Nazareth was situated, was a densely populated district of extraordinary fertility. Not a particle of ground was left idle. Pasturage, corn-land, and fruit trees were all excellent, and the produce in wheat and olives was perfectly amazing. The population is described by Josephus as so dense that (to take an example from our own country) on an area about equal to that of Northumberland there were ten times as many inhabitants and more than two hundred cities and villages, the least of which had a population of more than fifteen thousand ! Of course these figures must be exaggerated ; but when we remember that the Jewish historian was writing of his own times and of the district of which he had himself been governor, and that there must have been many persons living who could, at least to some extent, have checked his statements, we shall feel that, though he may have exaggerated, he can hardly have invented his facts, and that the population of Galilee **must** really have been very great. This fertile and populous

district, then, was marked by the constant stir of prosperous industry ; life and animation pervaded it from end to end, and the interchange and conflict of ideas formed a part of its general activity. The Galilæans are described as industrious, animated, and open-hearted in character, faithful and steadfast, warlike from their very infancy, easily excited, courageous and patriotic, and strict in their observance of the precepts of morality. Of course all these circumstances must have exercised a marked influence upon the development of the character of Jesus, but we shall not attempt to trace out and identify the several features of this Galilæan type of character in him. We must not forget, however, that he was the witness, in his youth, of events which must have contributed in no small degree on the one hand to quicken his enthusiasm for his people and his religion, and on the other to make him careful in his selection of means and averse to violence. While he was still a boy, when a census of Judæa and Samaria was taken by the governor of Syria, Judas the Galilæan¹ unfurled the banner of revolt,² with the cry : “ No master for Israel but the Lord ! Tribute to Rome, or submission to the stranger, is treason to Him ! ”³ Would not the youthful Jesus burn with zeal for the sacred cause ? Would he not long that he were old enough to bear arms himself ? Would he not pray that the Lord might send his blessing upon this hero of the faith as he had done on that other Judas called the Maccabee ? But in spite of his certain hope and his ardent prayers the legions of Rome annihilated the rebels after a hopeless struggle, and it may have been his bitter disappointment in the failure of Judas that first led Jesus, reading the will of God recorded in the event, to break with the material expectations of his people, and to look upon the kingdom of the Messiah chiefly as a spiritual deliverance which God would bring about in answer to the faith and prayers of his servants.

The whole district of Galilee was a glorious region, in which the beauties of Nature displayed themselves in the richest alternations of hill, valley, and table-land ; and, since Nazareth enjoyed its full share of beauty, it would not be easy to over-estimate the effect of its magnificent natural scenery upon the heart of Jesus. The name of the city never once occurs in the Old Testament or the writings of Josephus, and it owes its fame entirely to Jesus. It still exists, with its three thousand inhabitants. It is built in terraces at the

¹ Acts v. 37.

² See pp. 4-7.

³ Compare Matthew xxii. 17 (Mark xii. 14; Luke xx. 22).

foot and on the slope of one of the hills, among which it nestles, and is shut in by limestone rocks. The climate is very healthy ; the houses, hidden behind rows of vines, cypresses, and fig-trees, interspersed with gardens and richly-cultivated fields, or palm and olive gardens, present a most attractive appearance. The neighborhood is lovely, and a short ascent leads up to a table-land, from which the prospect on all sides is indescribably beautiful. How often must Jesus have sat there in early life thinking of his people, of the times in which he lived, and of the kingdom of God ! Travellers of different countries, who have visited these delightful valleys and fertile slopes, unite in describing the region as a perfect paradise. The well is still shown, which eighteen centuries ago was the life and joy of the little city, where every evening the women came, — Mary, of course, being one of them, — with their pitchers on their heads, to draw water and talk together. A narrow valley a few miles in length leads down from the city to the plain of Jezreel.

Amidst scenes so lovely and so sublime did Jesus spend his youth. His parents had to support themselves by the labor of their hands;¹ but the wants were so few, and the mode of life so simple in those regions, that poverty was not a burden. The family was rather a large one. There were five sons and several daughters,² though we do not know how many. So, of course, they had all to work for their bread ; and we find it mentioned that Jesus himself worked as a carpenter.³ A tradition, preserved by an old ecclesiastical Father, says that he used to make plows and ox-yokes. We know from other sources⁴ that it was not considered any disgrace to be a workman. On the contrary, the most celebrated of the Rabbis all learned some handicraft by which to support themselves, for even those who held the position of teachers were not accustomed to receive money for their lessons. Thus we find different Rabbis mentioned as shoemakers, tailors, bakers, incense-makers, builders, grave-diggers, land-surveyors, joiners, tanners, smiths, and what-not. One of them said : “ It is good to combine the study of the Law with some handicraft ; for the exercise of both together preserves a man from sin. But any study which is pursued without a handicraft ministers to vanity and draws sin behind it.” But to return to Jesus. Since his early years were not spent in ease and luxury, his circumstances early developed

¹ Matthew xiii. 55.

² Mark vi. 3.

² Matthew xiii. 55, 56 (Mark vi. 3).

⁴ Compare Acts xviii. 3.

his character, strengthened his will, and increased his knowledge of life. And his childhood was certainly a bright one ; for when he was a man he looked back with pleasure upon his childhood,—spoke of the natural simplicity, the openness to good impressions, and the innocence of that time of life,¹ and recalled his childish games,² and all that he had seen within³ and without⁴ the house.

Of Joseph we know nothing directly ; but since Jesus speaks of a father's love as a reflection of the love of God,⁵ since he could find no higher or more glorious name for God himself than that of Father,⁶ we may safely conclude that Joseph was a faithful, careful, affectionate parent ; in a word, all that a father ought to be. Of the brothers of Jesus, we afterwards meet with James as a man of extraordinary strictness of principle, immovable determination, and great influence.⁷ Judas, too, seems to have distinguished himself, for it was certainly not from their relationship to Jesus only, but also from their personal qualities, that the "brothers of the Lord" were regarded among the earliest communities as equal to the Apostles.⁸ We may, therefore, safely assume that the family circle in which Jesus grew up was far from an ordinary one, and that no moral stain ever cleaved to it. It is impossible to believe that there was ever any lack of religion, any of that meanness which often springs from stress of material circumstances, or that cringing which a hard and embittering discipline may produce, in the home at Nazareth. It deserves notice, too, that when the members of the family had gone upon their several ways in the world, the old bond of union still remained, and, in spite of their differences of opinion, they retained the same warm interest and care for one another's welfare.⁹

But Jesus differed greatly from the rest of the family in his disposition and his views of life, and he must often have sadly felt the want at home of that sympathetic and intelligent appreciation of his ideals for which his heart longed. And, in saying this, we refer more particularly to Mary. From the fact that most great men have owed a great deal to their mothers, it has been supposed that Jesus must have done so too ; and several hints contained in the legendary

¹ Matthew xviii. 3, 10 xix. 14 (Mark ix. 36, x. 13-16 ; Luke xviii. 15-17).

² Matthew xi. 16, 17 (Luke vii. 32). ³ Matthew xiii. 33 ; Luke xv. 8, 9, &c.

⁴ Matthew xiii. 3-8, xx. 1-15, &c. ⁵ Matthew vii. 9-11 ; Luke xi. 11-13.

⁶ Matthew vi. 9, &c. ⁷ Galatians ii. 9-12 ; Acts xxi. 18, &c.

⁸ 1 Corinthians ix. 5 ; Acts i. 13, 14 ; Galatians i. 19.

⁹ Matthew xii. 46 f. (Mark iii. 21, 31, f. ; Luke viii. 19).

portions of Gospels¹ have been adduced to prove that it was so. We certainly shall not be wrong in supposing that Mary was a devout, gentle, affectionate mother, and that in the disposition and the outward ways of Jesus some of his mother's characteristics reappeared. But, on the other hand, an impartial consideration of the facts compels us to admit that Mary, on the only occasion on which she appears in real history, shows herself an affectionately solicitous, but also a narrow-minded, woman;² and that, on the two occasions on which Jesus indirectly refers to her,³ a kind of sadness, a tone of disappointment, is perceptible in his language, which may easily be explained by her never having been able to understand or appreciate him, or to sympathize with his aims. It is possible, even, that the visit to the temple rests upon some faint reminiscence that Jesus was not understood by his mother; that even in early times a strong desire had more than once come over him to escape from his ordinary employments and existence and enter the higher regions of the spiritual life, but that this disposition had given his mother so much pain and anxiety that in obedience to her he reconciled himself to the ordinary course of life again.⁴ However this may be, Jesus was so far superior to those about him that we can hardly blame his mother and brothers for not honoring him as he deserved, and for not having faith in him during his life.⁵

Jesus probably never went to school. At any rate, he certainly did not attend any institution for teaching the theological lore of the Scribes;⁶ and, indeed, if we can trust the confused accounts of the Talmud, public teaching was not properly organized until a few years before the fall of Jerusalem; so that in all probability there was not a school at Nazareth when Jesus was a boy, and he must have learned reading from his father or mother. But in ancient times, especially in the East, such a circumstance did not necessarily imply a defective education or any want of breeding and culture. These things were far more common to the different classes of society than they are with us, and were not in any case carried to a very high pitch of refinement. Indeed, it

¹ Luke i. 28, 30, 38, 42, 45, 46–55, ii. 19, 51.

² Mark iii. 21.

³ Luke xi. 27, 28; Matthew xii. 47–50 (Mark iii. 31–35; Luke viii. 19–21).

⁴ Luke ii. 43, 48, 49, 50, 51.

⁵ Matthew xiii. 57 (Mark vi. 4; Luke iv. 24; John iv. 44).

⁶ Matthew xiii. 54 (Mark vi. 2). Compare John vii. 15.

was rather an advantage to Jesus than otherwise that he had not been to the university at Jerusalem ; for the hair-splitting discussions which were all the rage there would only have burdened his memory and perverted his reasoning faculties, whereas, as it was, he retained the originality of his genius. We must never forget that among the Jews very special attention was paid to the education of children. The duty devolved upon the parents, more especially upon the father, who was bound to take every possible opportunity afforded by daily life¹ of impressing upon his children's minds the contents of the Scriptures, especially of the Law, and thus instructing them at once in their religious duties and in the history of their country. This duty is pressed upon the parents with the greatest emphasis ; and the children in their turn are commanded to honor their father and mother in the commandment which takes the highest place after those enjoining the duties towards God.² Nowhere else in antiquity was the bond between parent and child so close, the relation in which they stood to each other so well regulated, or domestic life so full of affection and of the spirit of religion as in Israel. "Our glory and the purpose of our lives," says Josephus, "is the education of our children and the observance of the Law."

The parents were assisted in their weighty task by the synagogue,—an institution which, since the days of Ezra, had contributed more than any thing else to make the Jewish religion the inalienable possession of the people. The historian quoted above declares that reverence for and obedience to the divine commandments were impressed upon the Jews from earliest childhood as the principal object of life ; so that all of them, so to speak, knew the laws earlier and better than their own names. "They are so imprinted on our souls that we are ready to die for them." From the time when he was five years old, most likely, Jesus regularly went to the synagogue at Nazareth week by week,³ and there he always heard a portion of the Law, followed by a portion of the prophets,⁴ read and explained. Here, too, he came directly into contact with the religious ideas and expectations of his people, and the religious life of the time filled his bosom. Here he met the Pharisees, the devout leaders of Israel, and under their influence he was penetrated by the thought that

¹ Deuteronomy vi. 7, 20-25, xi. 19; Genesis xviii. 19; Exodus xii. 26 f., xiii. 8, 14 f.; Joshua iv. 6 f.

² Compare Exodus xxi. 15, 17.

³ Luke iv. 16.

⁴ Luke iv. 16, 17; Acts xiii. 15, xv. 21.

the Lord demanded righteousness as the condition of his favor, and by the passionate longing for Israel's redemption by the coming of the Messianic kingdom. Here, too, the most beautiful utterances of the great teachers at Jerusalem came to his knowledge.

What good use the eager boy, with his powerful memory and clear judgment, must have made of this religious teaching appears not only from his intimate acquaintance with the Pharisees, but from the profound and accurate knowledge of the Scriptures which he afterwards showed. For when we remember the great price of a copy of the Scripture we can hardly suppose that the carpenter had one of his own. It is possible, however, that he may have possessed a single book; and when we observe that Jesus borrows most of his quotations from the oracles of Isaiah,¹ the conjecture forces itself upon us that he had had the roll in his own hands more than once. Certainly the prophets had a far greater charm for him than the Law. In general, however, he must have gained his knowledge of the Scripture in the synagogue.

It must have cost Jesus many an effort in after life to raise himself above all the religious prejudices which had been instilled into him from his very infancy. But we must not forget that in this respect again his education in Galilee brought great advantages with it. Galilee enjoyed greater religious freedom than Judæa, from which it was separated by the territory of the hostile and detested Samaritans. This separation from the focus of Jewish orthodoxy,—from Jerusalem with its temple, its priesthood, and its rabbinical schools,—necessarily prevented the scholastic love of hair-splitting, with the extreme narrowness and formality which accompanied it, from ever thoroughly taking root in Galilee among the people, or even among the Scribes,—who were tolerably numerous here also. Galilee was peculiar in several respects. It was so near Phœnicia, Syria, and Arabia that it was impossible to avoid intercourse with the heathen; and indeed some of the Galilæan towns themselves,—such as Tiberias, Kadesh, and Scythopolis,—had a heathen population. These things could not fail insensibly to widen the horizon of the inhabitants. For these and other reasons the Galilæans were held in small esteem at Jerusalem. They were said to be

¹ E.g. Matthew xi. 5; from Isaiah xxix. 18, xxxv. 3, lxi. 1; Matthew xiii. 14 f.; from Isaiah vi. 9, 10; Matthew xv. 8 f.; from Isaiah xxix. 13; Matthew xxvi. 13; from Isaiah lvi. 7; Matthew xxi. 33; from Isaiah v. 1, &c.

deficient in knowledge of the Law. It was said contemptuously, "There are no priests among the Galilæans," and "They do not learn the Law from one teacher." Their provincial pronunciation was ridiculed. From time to time, indeed, Scribes from Jerusalem would visit Galilee;¹ but their stay was limited, and it is very doubtful whether at this period they ever went to Nazareth.

This is all we know of the early life of Jesus. In the foreground we must place his own singular exaltation of character, the great gifts of heart and head which God had entrusted to him. Then we must take into account the circumstances, in many respects decidedly favorable, which contributed to the development of his character. It appears from the tranquil conscience and the exalted self-reliance of the man Jesus that this development took place without any great shocks to contaminate his moral life, without stagnation and without disturbance. Though he had never put himself forward, though his appearance as a prophet caused general amazement among his townsmen,² yet he had quietly matured himself for the task which God would assign to him. Ever increasing in love of God and of his neighbor, fervently longing for the coming of God's kingdom, he steadily "grew in wisdom and in favor with God and man."

Would that the same could be said of the early life and development of all of us! Which of us, with the example of Jesus before him, must not reproach himself with time wasted or worse than wasted, with want of respect and obedience, with unclean imaginations or evil practices, with weakness of will, want of love, and a hundred things beside!

John, so far as we know, was the only master, in the proper sense, that Jesus ever had. This man exercised a decisive influence upon the formation of his ideas and projects, and upon his whole subsequent history; but of him, and of the movement to hasten the coming of the Messianic age associated with his name, we must speak in a separate chapter.

¹ Matthew xv. 1 (Mark iii. 22, vii. 1).

² Matthew xiii. 54-57 (Mark vi. 2, 3).

CHAPTER VII.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

LUKE III. 1-18.¹

THE stories we have been dealing with hitherto are but an introduction to the Gospel history. We are now approaching the history itself, and are therefore immediately transported to a considerably later period, and at the same time placed on somewhat firmer ground. The years over which the work of John and Jesus extended, and the precise period at which the former began his public life, cannot be fixed with certainty. Luke speaks of the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, which would fall in the years twenty-eight and twenty-nine of our era; but this Evangelist is very inaccurate in his dates, and his knowledge of history in general leaves much to be desired.² In this very year, for instance, he mentions a certain Lysanias as governor of Abilene (a principality northeast of Palestine, not far from Damascus), whereas this man had really been murdered more than half a century before. Again, he mentions both Annas and Caiaphas as high priests at the time. Caiaphas did really hold the office from A.D. 18 to A.D. 36, but Annas had been deposed in A.D. 14. We can therefore place but small reliance on the statement of Luke; but other considerations prevent our departing from it very far. We may take it as certain that John did not come forward before A.D. 28, and A.D. 33 is the extreme limit on the other side. On the whole, this latter date may be taken as the most probable.

These were sad times for Israel,—times of deep humiliation and ever-growing discontent. The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, was wholly unfitted for his post. A Jewish writer of the period, the Alexandrian philosopher Philo, speaks of Pilate as obstinate and inexorable in character, mentions his reckless arrogance and his furious temper, and sums up the crimes of his government as follows: venality, violence, robbery, outrage, bullying, constant executions without legal trial, unbounded and unendurable cruelty. Now the Jews could bear much if their religious peculiarities were respected; but Pilate, who did not in the least under-

¹ Matthew iii. 1-12; Mark i. 1-8.

² See pp. 55, 56.

stand them, and had no desire to please them, exasperated them quite needlessly in this respect. He began his rule by a false step, which he could never recover; for when the Roman troops were marching to Jerusalem, to go into winter quarters there, he ordered them to take their standards, with the silver busts of the emperor to which divine honors were paid, into the city with them. The order was carried out under cover of the night; but in the morning, when the citizens perceived these images in the citadel right opposite the temple, a great cry of horror rose. The abomination of idolatry in the holy city! No previous governor had ever attempted such a thing. Whole troops of Jews set out for Cæsarea to implore Pilate to remove the offence. He refused. Five whole days they persisted, night and day, and could not be removed from the spot. On the sixth day he summoned them into the circus; and when they raised their impetuous cry once more a band of soldiers suddenly rushed upon them with naked swords, but the Jews flung themselves upon the ground, laid bare their necks to the sword, and declared that they would die rather than violate the Law. Even Pilate shrank from such a massacre, and, in amazement at their obstinacy, ordered the images to be brought back to Cæsarea. But afterwards he suspended on the walls of his palace at Jerusalem, which had formerly belonged to Herod I., some thickly-gilt shields, with a short inscription to Tiberius. This he did, according to Philo, less for the sake of honoring the emperor than to annoy the Jews. The result was renewed resistance,—the sons of Herod placing themselves at the head of the people. The governor was obstinate; but a petition to Tiberius secured the removal of the obnoxious shields. Even when Pilate benefited the Jews, he did it so clumsily as to raise bad blood. Thus, when he built a new aqueduct for Jerusalem, he laid hold of the treasures of the temple to defray the cost. A riot and consequent massacre were the results. On another occasion he ordered certain Galilean pilgrims to be slaughtered in the temple, so that their blood was mingled with that of their sacrifices.¹

Now it happened at this as at other periods of Jewish history that the deep depression of the times, when “the Lord hid his countenance and gave over his people to the reproaches of the heathen,”² roused with new strength in the noblest sons of Israel their hope in God and his deliverance. While the high priest and the whole party of the Sadducees

¹ Luke xiii. 1.

² Psalms xliv. 12-14, 24.

usually kept on a good understanding with the governor, while the Scribes and most of the adherents of the Pharisaic party consoled themselves with hair-splitting studies of the Law and the tradition, or with scrupulously observing and enforcing the countless precepts of a frivolous formality; while the people murmured but never thought of seeking the guilt in their own hearts, and humbling themselves before the Lord; while the pious sighed but saw no light,—a man stood up in the wilderness of Judah, and, in the strength of his trust in God, promised an end to all this misery. Nay, more, in obedience to the voice of God in his heart he sought to make Israel's deliverance possible; for he knew that those only could be rescued and delivered who bowed beneath the chastening rod of the Lord, and did penance for their sins. In the sufferings of his people he saw an indication that the promises of God to the former generations were on the point of being fulfilled, for these things could not last, and humiliation and misery could go no further; but at the same time he recognized in them a righteous visitation on the people's sins, and the announcement of the great judgment of God, in which all the impious should be destroyed. He felt that the Messianic age, and the fearful day of judgment that would inaugurate it, were now close at hand. Nothing was wanting but one to prepare the way of the Lord and make Israel ready for his coming. This task he therefore took upon himself, that he might hasten the dawn of the glorious future. "Repent, for the Messianic kingdom is at hand,"¹—such was the substance of his preaching.

He was certainly not alone in his wishes and his expectations, but gave utterance to what was in the heart of many more whose fervent prayers rose to the God of Israel, and who longed for the Messianic kingdom more eagerly than ever. But, to say nothing of the stern enthusiasm with which he preached repentance, no one before him had had the courage to speak in so decisive a tone, and to put his own hand to the work; though now that he had once made himself the mouth-piece of the high-wrought Messianic expectations of his time, his words found an echo everywhere. The news of his appearance spread through the length and breadth of the land. It penetrated even to the distant Galilee, that had been spared the Roman supremacy so far; and from the secluded Nazareth there came to the preacher of repentance the man who was to be his successor and far more

¹ Matthew iii. 2.

besides. But it was chiefly in Judæa and Samaria, groaning under the tyranny of Pilate, that the fuel was collected into which the spark was thrown. From Jerusalem, from all Judæa, from the whole region round about the Jordan,¹ the people streamed to hear the new preacher. And though the Samaritans of course could not go to a Jewish man of God, yet we shall hardly be wrong in connecting a similar movement which rose in Samaria not long afterwards with the appearance of John in Israel. For in Samaria, too, a popular leader appeared, and promised to show his fellow-countrymen the spot on Mount Gerizim in which were buried the tables of the Law, the golden basin of manna, and other sacred objects which had long been lost, but which popular tradition and belief declared were to be discovered again in the Messianic age.² This man was followed by a large and constantly-increasing crowd of delighted enthusiasts; but Pilate sent his cavalry and heavy infantry to the spot, and the attempt to found the Messianic kingdom was quenched in blood.

In a word, the whole movement to which the New Testament and other writings of the same period bear witness received its decisive impulse from the preacher in the wilderness of Judah.³

Who was this man? Nothing but his bare name, John, is preserved. Neither Josephus nor the historical portions of the Gospels tell us so much as his father's name. His title, "the Baptist," superseded the usual style of "John, the son of so and so." It is not impossible, however, to arrive at certain more or less probable conclusions with regard to his origin and education.

Probably he was a Judæan by birth. All our accounts of his preaching in the wilderness of Judah⁴ authorize the supposition that he was not a stranger there, but felt completely at home on the scene of his activity. The figures of speech he uses, the mode of life he adopted, the extreme privations to which he subjected himself, all confirm us in our opinion. His life was an unbroken fast;⁵ that is to say, he ate only what was absolutely necessary to sustain life, nothing but what the sterile country itself could furnish. He quenched his thirst at the spring, and stayed his hunger with locusts

¹ Matthew iii. 5 (Mark i. 5).

² ³ Maccabees ii. 4-8; Revelation ii. 17, xi. 19.

⁴ See vol. i. p. 518.

⁵ Matthew xi. 12.

⁵ Matthew xi. 18.

dried in the sun, with wild honey, and other such food. He was a genuine son of the wilderness.

It is interesting to note these particulars; for the region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, however monotonous and inhospitable, was the scene of high-wrought spiritual life. John was not the only eremite who withdrew from all the pleasures of life into this wilderness, and collected a band of disciples about him by the fame of his sanctity. About twenty years later we hear of a certain Banus who dwelt there, clothed in the bark of trees, eating nothing but the natural products of the soil, and constantly bathing day and night in cold water. We know of him through Flavius Josephus, who joined him in early life and remained with him three years. He was certainly not his first or only disciple.

Of far greater importance, however, are the colonies or hamlets of the Essenes, which were situated, at the beginning of our era, just in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea.¹ Here lived the Essenes, secluded from the turmoil of society, a close order into which no one could be received except after a novitiate of three years, and after taking a solemn oath. All distinctions between rich and poor, slaves and freemen, were annulled; but unconditional obedience to the laws and regulations of the order, and to the leaders and older members, was exacted, and an iron discipline reigned supreme. The Essenes were unmarried and observed the strictest abstinence, refraining from the use of meat, of wine, and of spirits; offering early morning prayers, pursuing peaceful industries, observing the Sabbath with incredible minuteness, performing numerous ceremonial ablutions, partaking of a common meal, and devoting themselves to pious reflections and speculations as to the future, in which in all probability the Messianic expectation occupied a prominent position.

Of course John must have known of this sect, and must have felt its influence. Indeed, he has frequently been regarded as himself a member of the order of Essenes. But this is a mistake. His style of life, it is true, reminds us of theirs; but he stood alone, and belonged to no close society. He submitted his followers to baptism only once in their lives, and exacted no oath from them. Above all he had none of that dread of ceremonial uncleanness² which made the Essenes shrink with the utmost horror from all contact with publicans or outcast women. But no one can say how far he

¹ Compare p. 6.

² Matthew xxi. 32.

was carried away by the intensity of the spiritual life that drew hermits and monks to these regions above all others ; how far the impressions he there received may have contributed to wake the sense of his vocation, the longing to do something for God and his people, the hope that the Messianic kingdom might be founded ! His person was impressive and commanding, his preaching bold and stern, even to the point of harshness ; both were threatening and sombre, in perfect harmony with the wilderness which was the scene of his activity.

We can see him still in imagination, with the rough mantle of camel's hair thrown upon his naked body, bound round his waist with a leather girdle. Such a garment was worn in sign of penitence ; but it seems also to have been the usual costume in ancient times of all who would announce themselves as prophets.¹ In the case of Elijah both the girdle and mantle are especially mentioned.² And John came in Elijah's place. No touching lamentation like Jeremiah's, no rapturous strain of consolation like the second Isaiah's,³ need be looked for from his lips, — but preaching terrible as the thunder ! Elijah had been called “the prophet of fire, whose word burned like a torch ;” and must not John, in taking up the task that had been assigned to Elijah, regard himself as “ordained in the Scripture to preach repentance in those times, to turn away the wrath of God before it broke forth at the Messianic judgment, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children again, and restore the tribes of Jacob ?”⁴

Such was the spirit in which he undertook his task. “Repent,” he cried, “for the kingdom of heaven is near !” Malachi had threatened, “Behold the day of judgment comes, burning like a furnace, and all the proud and sinful shall be as stubble, and the day that is drawing near shall consume them with fire till neither root nor branch be left. Who shall abide when Yahweh appears ?”⁵ And in the same spirit John rose up, lest the Lord when he came in glory should smite the land of Canaan with his curse as though it were a heathen country ;⁶ and he cried, “The axe is laid already to the root of the trees ; and every tree that does not bear good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire. After me comes the Lord of Hosts, and whomsoever he finds ready he

¹ Zechariah xiii. 4; Isaiah xx. 2. ² 2 Kings i. 8 ; compare ii. 13, 14.

³ See vol. ii. chap. x. p. 417.

⁴ Jesus Sirach xlvi. 1, 10.

⁵ Malachi iv. 1, iii. 2; compare Zephaniah i. 14-18.

⁶ Malachi iv. 6.

will baptize with the Holy Spirit;¹ but the unconverted will he plunge into the fiery furnace.” Sometimes the preacher changed his image, and compared God to the husbandman who flings the corn that he has threshed into the air with his shovel, that the light and worthless chaff may be blown away and separated from the precious grain; even so would the Lord sift the holy from the unholy. “Behold he comes with the fan in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; he will gather the wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

This was the usual tone and subject of his preaching. You will notice that he thought and spoke entirely in the spirit of the ancient prophets, or rather of the most threatening discourses of the sternest of their number. His language was severe and harsh. In the description of his work we seek in vain for the traces of those softer emotions which often touch us so deeply in the oracles of the Old Testament. His announcement of the approaching Messianic age appears to have borne the character almost exclusively of an exhortation to repentance, and not to have had a touch of consolation or encouragement in it. We should never have learned from him that the founding of the Messianic kingdom was the object of Israel’s wildest hopes and deepest longings, as the fulfilment of God’s great promises to the fathers and the pledge of the infinite mercy and unshaken faithfulness of the Lord. Only compare the so-called song of praise of Zachariah² with the preaching of John! Could there be a greater contrast?

Nevertheless, we may take it for granted that he too looked upon the Messianic kingdom as the glorification and exaltation of Israel, as deliverance from foreign rule and vengeance upon the heathen oppressor, as the eternal glory and unbroken bliss of the saints. But since he confined himself almost entirely to what must immediately precede this golden age, and considered it his exclusive mission to prepare the hearts of men for its coming, God became to him so entirely the God of judgment and the God of vengeance that his mercy falls into the background, eclipsed, as it were, by his anger. Though John’s work is so closely connected with the gospel, yet there is not a trace of the gospel tone or spirit in his preaching, not even a presentiment in his soul of faith in the God of love. But this ought not to surprise us when we remember that the conception of

¹ Isaiah xxxii. 15, xliv. 3; Ezekiel xxxvi. 26-29, xxxix. 29; Joel ii. 28, 29.

² Luke i. 68-79, compared with Luke iii. 7-9, 17. See p. 45.

God's nature cherished by the Israelites had by no means gained in gentleness or attractiveness since the Captivity. On the contrary, they thought of God as ever further and further removed from man, as the terrible and unapproachable Judge of the world, inexorably stern and dreadful in his wrath. John was a true child of his age, however high his prophetic gifts exalted him above it.

The expression “kingdom of heaven,” for the Messianic age, was borrowed from the usage of the time. Neither the Scribes who introduced it, nor the people who adopted it, nor John himself, intended for a moment to speak of an abode in heaven, or even of the heavenly character of the coming age. The expression may have referred to the heavenly origin of the kingdom ; for the fearful revolution and all its consequences were to be brought to pass by the coming of the Lord from heaven. But most likely the name “kingdom of heaven” was used instead of “kingdom of God,” simply because the Jews of the period had a superstitious dislike of using the word God when they could avoid it,—just as many people now prefer to speak of Providence or Heaven instead of God.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand !” If we ascribe the later Jewish tinge in John’s conception of God to the influence of his age, and set aside the purely menacing character of his language as due to his special conception of his mission, then the burden of his preaching perfectly agrees with that of all the other prophets. It is a new variation upon the old theme familiar to every one of them without exception. “Amend your ways, for Yahweh’s justice sends all these disasters to chastise you, nor will it suffer him to do to you according to his covenant ; but if you repent he will comfort you with such bliss and glory as has never yet entered into the heart of man to conceive.” Such was the substance of all the prophecies, the one only message which the ancient men of God had ever brought to Israel. So far, then, John stood exactly in the line of the prophets. And in that which constituted the very essence of the prophetic character,—the irresistible impulse to stand up before the people, the hallowed inspiration to speak to them in the name of God, and above all the unshaken hope that a glorious morn-row would with infallible certainty dissipate the gloom and darkness of to-day,—in all this John might bear comparison with Jeremiah and Michah themselves.

But the appearance of a prophet was a far more significant

fact, and demanded far more courage on the prophet's part in the year thirty-three of our era than in the eighth, the seventh, or the sixth century B.C.; and in other respects, too, John excelled his predecessors, and was "more than a prophet."¹ He dared to undertake the task of Elijah. In holy impatience he dared to promise the dawn of the Messianic age as close at hand, whereas his predecessors had generally represented it as in the more or less distant future. He laid greater stress than any other man of God had done upon the share which Israel itself must take in hastening this future, and as it were forcing the kingdom of heaven from God! Above all, he himself began to make ready and prepare the way by baptizing in the Jordan, so as to make any longer delay impossible. So John was more courageous and more practical than all the prophets.

To perform the ceremony of baptism he had, of course, to leave the wilderness; and indeed at the end of his ministry, which certainly was not of long duration, we find him in the Transjordanic district, still further removed from the scene of his first appearance. We may suppose that he did not begin to baptize until the attention of the public had already been fixed upon him, and he had begun to make some impression. Those who received his baptism declared their fixed resolve to amend their lives; and for this reason the ceremony was called a "baptism of repentance," and was usually preceded by a confession of sins. John on his side promised the penitent, in the name of God, "forgiveness of sins,"—that is, immunity from the terrors of the Messianic judgment. He would admit no one of whose genuine repentance and resolutions of amendment he was not convinced. This baptism, by which, as Josephus truly remarks, he established a society or community (of the future partakers of the Messianic blessings), was at that time a novelty; for the figurative mention of "washing" and "pure water,"² which occurs here and there in the prophets, even if it suggested some such rite, furnished no precedent. The purification of the people by Moses before the proclamation of the Law is perhaps rather more to the point.³ The repeated daily ablutions of the Essenes hardly afford a parallel, for they were intended to secure external (Levitical) purity,⁴ while the

¹ Matthew xi. 9. ² Isaiah i. 16, xliv. 3; Ezekiel xxxvi. 25; Zechariah xiii. 1.

³ Exodus xix. 10, 14.

⁴ Compare Mark vii. 4 and Genesis xxxv. 2; Exodus xix. 10; Numbers xix. 7. See vol. ii. chap. xviii. p. 508.

baptism of John, which was performed once for all, was a symbol of moral purity. We must regard the baptism of John, therefore, as a very original institution, of great beauty and appropriateness ; or, in the language of the age, we must say that the rite was of heaven (of God) and not of men.¹ John's object was that the Lord, when he came, should find all things ready,— a band already set apart of those who feared him, “ whom he might spare, his heritage ; a band upon whom the sun of righteousness should ascend, and who should find healing under his wings.”² As to the form under which John thought of the appearance of God, and of the Messianic bliss that was to succeed the day of judgment, our authorities leave us entirely in the dark.

The impression produced by the preacher of the wilderness and his proclamation of the kingdom of God was overwhelming ; and when he began to baptize it became deeper yet. From the nature of the case the number of his hearers was very limited at first, but it gradually rose until the people flowed to him in ever widening streams from every side. Among them there were many whose sense of guilt was roused by the passionate earnestness and the fearful denunciations of the prophet, till they felt and showed the penitence and promised the reformation he demanded, and were baptized by him in the Jordan. But perhaps the deep impression he produced is still more clearly shown in the fact that some who really had no sense of guilt at all, and had therefore formed no resolutions of amendment, were carried away by the stream, and came with the rest to hear the new prophet. They were men who expected and calculated upon the founding of the Messianic kingdom, and with a view to it desired to be baptized by John ; but did so only as a kind of extra precaution, so as to be safe in any case. If it did no good, they thought, at any rate it could not well do any harm. They had little doubt, however, that simply as Israelites, as members of the chosen people, they were already included in the covenant of the Lord, and could therefore claim a place in the Messianic kingdom, and had no cause to dread the judgment which would consume great sinners and heathen. At any rate, there were some in whom John perceived or suspected such ideas, and the burning stream of his indignation burst upon them. “ Tribe of vipers ! ” he thundered, refusing to baptize them, “ what brought you

¹ Matthew xxi. 25 (Mark xi. 30; Luke xx. 4).

² Malachi iii. 17, iv. 2.

here? Who told you to come to me for security against the wrath of God that will break upon you on that great day? First show me in your lives that when you talk about repentance you mean something by it! Soothe not yourselves with the idle thought, ‘We are the seed of Abraham, and ours is the promise of the Messianic kingdom;’ for I tell you this will avail you nothing, and the Almighty could make children of Abraham out of these stones on Jordan’s banks!”

The preacher of repentance feared nothing, and spared no one. Not even the royal purple overawed him; and we shall see presently how this boldness cost him his life at last. He drove his demand for penitence so well home, and waked such an echo in the consciences of his hearers, that no escape was left. A few specimens of his preaching have been preserved. When the crowds exclaimed, “You tell us to repent, and so we do; but say what you require or expect of us,”—he answered, “Overcome your greed, your selfishness, your hard-heartedness. Be generous and merciful. Whoever has two coats, let him give one of them to the needy; whoever has abundant food, let him satisfy the hungry.” Even soldiers, who were little better than ruffians for the most part in those days, came and asked him, “What must we do if we repent?” “Be content with your pay,” he answered; “treat the citizens decently, and lay hold of no man’s goods.” Simple as the exhortation was, it implied a complete change in the soldier’s habits of life; for discipline was very imperfect, and the soldiers supported or enriched themselves out of what they could exact from the citizens by violence or threats. Even the cursed and outcast hirelings of the heathen plunderers who sucked the marrow of Israel, even the publicans themselves, sometimes came to John and asked him reverently, “Master, what must our repentance be?” Strange that he did not tell them, first of all, to give up their occupation! But he contented himself with saying, “Never be guilty of injustice or extortion again; never exact a farthing more than what is fixed by your employers.” But the practice of draining the resources of a province and gaining wealth from the extortion was so universal, and the scramble between the higher officers and their subordinates for the chief share of the booty so shameless, that John’s exhortation involved nothing short of a revolution.

It was remarkable that these and such as these came gradually in greater and yet greater numbers to the wilder-

ness and the Jordan,—publicans, people of either sex who had been guilty of gross offences, notorious sinners smitten by the church's ban and the contempt of all right-minded citizens. It was doubtless because their sense of guilt was more easily roused and their consciences accused them more loudly than was the case with others; and also because the prophet, instead of rejecting them with horror, saw no such great difference between them and the ordinary Israelites, but considered all Israel as in truth unclean. It was with these outcast classes that John had most success. With them the working of the new influence was obvious, their repentance was practical, the impression they received permanent, their faith genuine.¹

In general, however, the result of the prophet's preaching and baptizing was certainly not equal to the expectations which might fairly have been formed by others, and with which he himself had begun his work. The leaders of the nation maintained an impartial or rather an indifferent attitude towards him to the last.² As long as he caused no disturbance they left him to pursue his way; but as for going to him themselves, the high-born priests and magistrates never dreamed of such a thing! They turned in contempt from a prophet to whose followers the very refuse of the people belonged.³ The Pharisees might have shown more interest in his work if only he would have paid them the attention they conceived to be their due; but such courteous advances were hardly to be expected from him, and the Pharisees on their side had not penetration enough to understand and appreciate him, and so take the initiative themselves. Inasmuch as he announced the near approach of the kingdom of God, for which they too passionately longed, they did pay some attention to him; but their superstitious reverence for antiquity and their slavish worship of the letter effectually prevented their recognizing in him a prophet of the true and ancient stamp. Their national pride might well be hurt by the small esteem in which he seemed to hold the privilege of descent from Abraham. Their narrowness and self-satisfaction may have caused many of them to regard as a fanatical extravagance the strictness and severity of a piety which, though somewhat similar⁴ to their own, went so much further. And the result was that many of them, when they saw what a consuming fire burned in him, shrugged their shoulders and

¹ Matthew xxi. 32.

² Mark xi. 33 (Matthew xxi. 27; Luke xx. 7).

³ Matthew xxi. 32.

⁴ Matthew ix. 14 (Mark ii. 18; Luke v. 33).

cried, “The fellow must be mad.”¹ But the great masses bowed before his mighty spirit, went to the wilderness in crowds,² desired to be admitted to his baptism,³ believed for the most part that he was a true prophet,⁴ and even accepted his announcement of the Messianic age in such complete good faith that, when he had changed the wilderness for the district beyond Jordan, the movement began to assume dangerous proportions in the eyes of Herod. Even after his imprisonment they did not forget him; and when he had been beheaded, and the royal murderer suffered a defeat in battle some time afterwards, the disaster was regarded by the people as the penalty exacted by a righteous God for the blood of John the Baptist.⁵ But in spite of all this the multitude was too shallow to retain a lasting impression of his preaching, and soon fell into the old groove again.

But among those he baptized there were some who would not leave him again; and he gradually found himself surrounded by a band of faithful and zealous disciples, who regulated their lives in accordance with his precepts. He ordered them to fast often and strictly;⁶ to show their repentance, and to do penance not only for themselves but for all Israel, including the unconverted. He taught them long prayers to be repeated daily for the speedy coming of the Messianic kingdom.⁷ There was nothing original in these commandments themselves; and, indeed, by laying such stress on outward forms of religion he showed how thoroughly he was still imbued with the Jewish spirit,⁸ since the Pharisees also enforced the same observances upon their followers.⁹ But the meaning of it all was very different in the two cases. With the Pharisees such actions were considered so meritorious as to afford a just ground of satisfaction to those who performed them; with John they were simply acts of self-humiliation to propitiate the Lord before the day of judgment, attempts to appease Him that the dawn of the golden age might be hastened. In a word his whole system turned upon the approach of the kingdom of God.

In dealing with the person of John we are on thoroughly historical ground. Not only does Josephus¹⁰ mention his

¹ Matthew xi. 18 (Luke vii. 33). ² Matthew xi. 7 (Luke vii. 24).

³ Luke vii. 29. ⁴ Matthew xxi. 26 (Mark xi. 32; Luke xx. 6).

⁵ Flavius Josephus. ⁶ Matthew ix. 14 (Mark ii. 18; Luke v. 33).

⁷ Luke xi. 1. ⁸ Matthew xi. 11.

⁹ Matthew ix. 14 (Mark ii. 18; Luke v. 33), as above. Also Matthew vi. 5
16; Luke xviii. 11, 12.

¹⁰ Jewish Antiquities, book xviii. chap. v. sec. 2.

name, his work, the influence he exercised, and his death, but the incidental notices scattered up and down throughout the first three Gospels bear from their very nature the clear stamp of truth. These casual, and as it were unintentional, allusions fill in and correct the passages referred to at the head of this chapter, in which the Gospels expressly describe the man and his preaching. There is, however, one point to which we have not yet referred, and as to which we must expressly caution our readers, as they will otherwise fall into a serious mistake concerning John the Baptist.

The point in question is this: John is represented as having proclaimed himself the precursor of Jesus, or rather of the Messiah. Luke even adds that the people were in doubt whether he himself was not the Christ, and that he took occasion thereby to promise that the Christ should come, and to distinguish himself from him as his predecessor.¹ "After me comes one who is mightier than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose;"² that is to say, for whom I am not worthy to perform the most menial office. The Gospels also apply to the Messiah John's prophecy of Him who would baptize with the Holy Spirit, and with the fire of judgment, and would purify his threshing-floor from chaff with his fan. But we have explained these words as referring not to the coming of the Christ, but to the appearance of God. This "Mightier One" is the Lord, is Yahweh himself. But inasmuch as the metaphor of the sandal-thong is not strictly applicable to any but a man, these words have generally been understood to refer to the Messiah, and consequently all the other promises and threats embodied in John's preaching have been taken in the same sense.

But this is certainly incorrect. In the preaching of John the Messiah completely disappears. This need not surprise us; for we know from our accounts of the religious condition of the Jews in the Captivity, and after the return, that many of the prophets conceived of the Messianic age without a human king (or Messiah). They expected that in this perfect realm of God, this age of Israel's holiness and glory, Yahweh would reign over his people in his own person. We must also observe that John is obviously dependent upon Malachi for his conceptions of the future. Not only did he borrow from this last of the prophets his conception of the task of Elijah, but the whole spirit of his preaching was

¹ Luke iii. 15, 16.

² Matthew iii. 11, 12 (Mark i. 7, 8; Luke iii. 15-18; Acts xiii. 21, 25).

strongly influenced by him. Now Malachi never speaks of the Messiah, but distinctly announces Yahweh's own appearance. We need not therefore be surprised if we find John anticipating, proclaiming, and preparing the kingdom of God itself, without ever speaking of its human ruler. But the strongest proof that we are not mistaken is found in the fact that everywhere in the prophets of the Old Testament, in the Apocryphal books, and in the writings of John's contemporaries, whenever the Messianic judgment is mentioned, the judge is no other than God himself; in no single case is the judgment deputed to the Messiah. The preaching of John can hardly have formed an exception. When he speaks of the Husbandman, of the coming Baptizer, of the Mighty One who handles the axe, he means no other than God.

Moreover, we can readily understand how the Evangelists fell into their mistake. When John, without knowing it beforehand, and without himself intending it, had actually become the precursor of Jesus (the Christ), the Christians could hardly help understanding of their Master and applying to him the predictions which the preacher had uttered of God. "He who comes after me is mightier than I," he had said; and were not his words fulfilled in Jesus? Moreover, the confusion was favored by the great change which the Messianic expectation underwent in Christian circles. The Apostles and apostolic communities cherished the hope that when Jesus ere long returned from heaven he would himself hold the last judgment.¹ What could be more obvious, therefore, than to explain the utterances of John concerning this judgment as having reference to (Jesus) the Christ? And of course this mistake must have had its influence upon the form in which the preaching of John was handed down and finally recorded.

For when once the tradition had brought John into such close relations with Jesus, it was easy to carry the process a little further. It was first imagined and then asserted that John had stood upon the same hostile footing towards the heads and leaders of the people as that which Jesus occupied. Thus, though the Sadducees and Pharisees had really remained neutral on the whole, Matthew represents them as having come with simulated interest to the baptism, and having drawn from the lips of the prophet the indignant "brood of vipers!" which we have already explained.² In the same spirit it is said elsewhere that they were only re-

¹ Matthew xxv. 31; Romans xiv. 10; 2 Corinthians v. 10.

² Matthew iii. 7. Compare xii. 34, xxiii. 33.

strained from openly expressing their condemnation of him by their fear of the populace.¹

In another respect, however, the tradition has remained remarkably faithful to history. It has not ascribed to John any of those miracles so profusely worked into the history of Jesus.² The reason is obvious. In the first place, the activity of John does not afford those natural opportunities for the introduction of miraculous stories which occasioned their insertion into the sketch of the life of Jesus; and, besides, the Baptist so soon fell into the shadow of his great successor that the imagination of the Christians soon deserted the forerunner, and busied itself exclusively with the central figure of the Gospel history.

In conclusion: With regard to John, we possess the witness of a contemporary who was better qualified than any other to judge him. Jesus repeatedly spoke of him expressly, and at length.³ It is from these utterances of Jesus that we derive our accurate knowledge of the man; and it is from them that we have borrowed most of the colors with which we have attempted to paint a true picture of him. Jesus regards him as a messenger of God, as greater than any of the prophets, as the man who roused the conscience of sinners, and intensified the Messianic hope of his contemporaries till it became an impetuous demand. But for all that, Jesus does not attempt to conceal the fact that John stood completely upon Jewish soil, and remained to the backbone a representative of the Law, insisting on the outer duties of religion, and filled with dread of the stern Judge of men. Great as he was, the humblest mortal who had really entered the kingdom of God, who had risen through faith in the love of the Heavenly Father to perfect freedom from all legal compulsion, was greater than he. Thus Jesus could bring his own vocation and work into the very closest connection with those of John, and could see in the lot of his predecessor a foreshadowing of what awaited him; and yet at the same time could place himself in direct contrast with John as the preacher of other good tidings, of another God and another kingdom of heaven.

The sequel of the history will show us the relations in which these two men came to stand towards each other, and the opportunities which Jesus had of observing the whole work and character of this last prophet of the ancient dispensation.

¹ Matthew xxi. 26 (Mark xi. 32; Luke xx. 6). ² Compare John x. 41.

³ Matthew xi. 2-19 (Luke vii. 18-35); Matthew xvii. 12, 13, xxi. 23-32 (Mark xi. 27-33; Luke xx. 1-8).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

MARK I. 9-11.¹

AT Nazareth, in the house of Joseph the carpenter, words of farewell were being exchanged. The father of the family was perhaps already dead,—at least we do not meet with him again; but the mother was still living, and on this occasion we picture all the married sons and daughters who had settled in the place² gathering once more under the old roof,—for one of their brothers, who had so far always stayed with his mother and worked at his trade to support her, was now leaving home, and they had all come to wish him a hearty farewell. Jesus was starting on a journey, and how long he would be away it was impossible to tell. Had he himself any presentiment that the turning point of his life was drawing near, and that he would never more come back to live under his mother's roof?

He had determined to go to the Jordan to John. The impulse which this man had given to the spiritual life of his people had made itself felt at Nazareth. At the city gate, in the synagogue, and in the homes of his friends and acquaintances, Jesus had listened with eager ears to the reports of this strange preacher of the wilderness. Had the Lord really visited His people, then, and raised up a prophet as in days gone by?³ Had John, indeed, received a commission from God to proclaim the approach of the Messianic age? At least his demand for repentance, and his immersion of the people in the purifying water, was something very different from the war-cry raised some years ago by Judas.⁴ If the kingdom of God was to be gained at all, it must be by righteousness and not by violence. If?— But might not Jesus find in the very eagerness with which he himself looked forward to the great day of the Lord a pledge that it was near at hand?

He could not quietly work on with plane and saw any longer. So he put his affairs in order, bade farewell to his family, and

¹ Matthew iii. 13-17; Luke iii. 21, 22.² 1 Corinthians ix. 5; Matthew xii. 46, xiii. 56.³ Compare Psalm lxxiv. 9; 1 Maccabees iv. 46, ix. 27, xiv. 41.⁴ See p. 89.

set out on his journey, perhaps by himself, perhaps in company with other Nazarenes, but in any case *alone*; for he could not communicate the thoughts and emotions that crowded into his breast to any one. When he reached the place of his destination he pressed with eager interest into the crowd of hearers, and marked well the man that he had so longed to see and hear. He was not disappointed. John's heroic and invincible courage, his unshaken confidence in God and in himself, his unexampled rigor, scorning all luxury or delicacy in food and raiment, made an indelible impression on Jesus. The main purport, at least, of his preaching waked a full echo in Jesus' soul, and the firm conviction that the promises of God were soon to be fulfilled, and that a sense of guilt and a longing for righteousness were the indispensable conditions of partaking of His salvation, struck deep root in his heart. Truly this man was a prophet; ay, and more than a prophet! For the prophets did but announce God's kingdom, while John prepared the way for it, and had risen up to do Elijah's work. All this Jesus felt. He penetrated to the inner meaning of John's efforts, and reverenced his bold resolve. He could not doubt that he was prompted by a divine impulse, was obeying the voice of God, when he baptized in the Jordan the host of penitents that confessed their sins and promised to strive after righteousness.

And after listening to his preaching for a time Jesus wished to be baptized himself. It is obvious why he did so. As soon as he recognized this baptism as a divine institution, it was but natural that he should wish to submit to it. He, too, would express under this form his fervent hope in the coming of the Lord. He, too, would register his promise to live after the will of God, and to do what in him lay to hasten the coming of the great salvation. He, too, would confess how far he was from what he would have himself, and how deeply he felt his own imperfection. He, too, would be received by the messenger of God into the company of those who should enter into the kingdom.

It would seem that he still remained with John for a time after he had been baptized by him. There was much in the preacher's surroundings, besides his person, to excite Jesus' interest and arrest his attention. How different were these scenes from those in which he had lived hitherto! He was struck by the fact that among John's most eager hearers, among the most deeply penitent of all whom he baptized, were many publicans or still more degraded creatures. Thought

almost every one supposed them to be hopelessly lost, they were still capable of being lifted up. He saw with indignation how the priests and upper classes stayed away in indifference. Was not the eagerness of these sinners to be allowed an entrance into the kingdom of God enough to shame them into better things?¹ While the religious and respectable classes, as a rule, showed so much less zeal than he would have expected, he beheld the masses, humble and believing, streaming to the baptism. What a contrast between the different opinions entertained about the Baptist! What a rich store of knowledge of human nature might here be gleaned!

This stay by the Jordan exercised a decisive influence on Jesus in his choice of a career and his conception of the task of his life. For here a resolution came to maturity which must long have been half formed within him, though hitherto his surroundings, and especially the influence of his relatives, had been unfavorable to its development. Henceforth he would devote his undivided powers to his people and to the kingdom of God. The impulse he received from the Baptist's preaching finally decided him.

The influence which John exercised upon Jesus was indeed powerful. We may note in passing that the metaphor used by Jesus of the good and the bad tree, the latter of which is cut down and cast into the fire, and other such expressions, remind us of the language of John;² and again, that Jesus, like John, gathered round him a circle of personal disciples, like him despised riches, and urged his followers to fling away whatever might be a hindrance to their entering into the kingdom of God, and in many other points reminds us of his predecessor. But it is a far more significant fact that at the beginning of his ministry he not only accepted as the voice of God the cry from the Baptist's mouth, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" but felt it laid as a word of God upon his own lips too.³

But, though now resolved, he waited till his time should come before he set his hand to the task. He could not work under John, and would not work in opposition to him. He could not even become his disciple, or long remain in his immediate neighborhood. For in course of time, though his admiration of him did not diminish, he felt ever more and more distinctly that a great chasm yawned between himself and

¹ Matthew xxi. 32.

² Matthew vii. 18-20; Luke xiii. 7-9. See, also, Luke xi. 1.

³ Matthew iv. 17, compare iii. 2. See also Matthew x. 7; Mark vi. 12.

the prophet of the wilderness. This God of judgment, whose name could only rouse a shuddering dread, was not the God of Jesus. He had received far other impressions of the Most High than those of burning wrath, and his heart bore other thoughts toward Him than that of awe-struck terror. He perceived in the set prayers and fasts which John prescribed a spirit of legalism and formality which could never enlist his sympathy; and even as to the baptism itself, he began to think that too much stress was laid upon it. As time went on, Jesus found himself less and less at home in this circle of ideas. We picture him drawing more and more completely back during the last period of John's career in the Transjordanic district, but still remaining near him, not far from the river. Perhaps, however, the whole period of his connection with John was shorter than might be supposed, for he was certainly one of his later hearers. Meanwhile he was preparing himself by observing human nature and the signs of the times, by pondering in solitude over the impressions he received, by contemplation and prayer, for the task of his life. Thus he completed his preparation for his work, and gained a clear conception of the way in which he must do it, and the class to whom he must appeal. And when his hour struck, he was ready.

From very early times the baptism of Jesus has been a source of great perplexity to the Christian community,—a sufficient proof that it is no invention; and even now it seems a strange contradiction to most Christians that the Christ himself should have begged his predecessor to admit him among the citizens of his own kingdom, and that the sinless one should have received the baptism of repentance. For us, indeed, these difficulties do not exist, though we can quite understand and appreciate them. Jesus was not the Christ as yet; and as to his repentance, the very purity and grandeur of his moral and spiritual nature must have made his conscience all the more tender, his self-accusation for even the slightest defect in zeal or in obedience all the louder, his sorrow for the least departure from his moral ideal, the smallest unfaithfulness to his calling to divine perfection, all the keener. And we must remember that the limitations of human nature necessarily imply some defect or imperfection, and that progress and development are impossible unless a lower grade of holiness and love, a certain defectiveness not perceived at the time perhaps but lamented afterwards, has

preceded. Again, we must not suppose that the expression of penitence required by John resembled the auricular confession made to a Roman Catholic priest; and without having any such gross trespasses to confess as we call sins, surely Jesus may have had an humble consciousness that he was not perfect in goodness, that he had faltered or stumbled on the path of faith, had been tardy or impatient on his way through life. Thus in later days he still emphatically declined the name of honor, “*good Master*;”¹ and in the same spirit he is represented in the New Testament itself as exposed to every kind of temptation, as still requiring to learn obedience, and as being made perfect only by the sharpest test of suffering.²

But however simple this may seem to us, in former times the baptism of Jesus was a great stumbling-block to the faithful. Legend, however, can account for any thing! Assumptions and conjectures entirely without foundation were soon consolidated into a narrative which explained how it was that Jesus took such an extraordinary step, and what it was that really happened at his baptism. Thus it was said, for instance, that Jesus did not go to Judæa of his own accord at all. A curious narrative, written in this sense, is still preserved from the “Gospel according to the Hebrews.” This Gospel was widely circulated in early times. In its original form it belonged to the first century, and bore a strong resemblance to Matthew; but the fragments referring to the baptism of Jesus, which some of the ecclesiastical Fathers have preserved for us, are among the later additions. One of these fragments runs as follows: “The Lord’s mother and brothers said to him, ‘John is baptizing for the forgiveness of sins; let us go to be baptized by him.’ But he said to them. ‘What sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, indeed, the words I have just uttered are themselves an error.’” The inventors of this story did not see that by making Jesus go up to the Jordan at the instigation of others, without desiring it or feeling the necessity of it himself, they were far from mending matters. Such weak conduct is unworthy of a man with a character of his own, and is quite foreign to the nature of Jesus. Just as unsatisfactory is another explanation that has come down from antiquity, according to which Jesus came to the Jordan not for his own sake, because he desired to be baptized, but

¹ Mark x. 17, 18 (Luke xviii. 18, 19).

² E.g. Matthew iv. 1, xvi. 23; Hebrews ii. 10, 18, iv. 15, v. 7-9.

for the sake of others, that they might recognize him as the Christ.

Matthew gives us yet another view of the case, and tells us that when Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan, not to hear John but simply to be baptized by him, John recognized him as the Messiah at once, and distinctly refused to go with him into the river. "I have need," he said, "to be baptized by you with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But why should you come to me to be bathed in these waters?" Then Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so! Think not of me as the Messiah now, for I must submit to your baptism as a commandment of God." Upon this John yielded. We have no hesitation in absolutely rejecting this story. John did not know Jesus; and even if he had known him, inasmuch as he was not yet the Christ, he could not possibly have recognized him as such; and indeed, as a matter of fact, he did not do so afterwards.¹ Nor was Jesus at all a man after the heart of John. And again, the very next verses contradict the story; for in them we read that the Spirit came down upon Jesus *after his baptism*, thus making him the Messiah then; and that John heard a divine voice at the same time proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, though, according to the preceding verses, he would not have required any such testimony.² We might further ask whether the prophet of the wilderness still needed the baptism of the Spirit,³ and how he could go on with his work after this scene just as he had done before. Finally, the objection already urged holds good in this case also: the inventors of the story overlooked the fact that in making Jesus wish for baptism, not from any need that he himself experienced but from a sense of its fitness, as though it were a form which he must respect, a so-called religious duty, they were sacrificing his integrity and independence. For to take part in any religious ceremony, simply because it is the proper thing to do, without having any feeling, or attaching any significance to it ourselves, may be quite in the spirit of the Jewish Christianity which invented the story, but is certainly condemned by the spirit of pure Christianity. Jesus is the last man from whom we should expect such formality and legalism.

In still earlier times the baptism of Jesus had been turned to account by tradition in another manner, and with a weightier

¹ Matthew xi. 2.
² Compare Luke i. 15.

² Matthew iii. 16, 17.

purpose. It was made into an event of supreme significance, the occasion upon which Jesus received the office of Messiah. Thus Mark informs us that Jesus, on coming up out of the river (Luke adds that he was praying),¹ saw the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, come down upon him, while the voice of God cried through the open heavens, “Thou art my beloved Son ! In thee I am well pleased !” The meaning is obvious ; namely, that at this moment God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power,² bestowed on him the needful gifts, and exalted him to the rank of Messiah (Anointed) ; at this moment, therefore, Jesus received his call, and first felt that he was the Messiah.

The origin of the story is easy to explain. The Holy Spirit, as the life-giving power of God, was compared, in the metaphorical language of the Jews, to a dove, according to the expression in the first account of the creation, “The Spirit of God *brooded* over the waters.”³ Thus “the voice of the dove” in the Song of Solomon⁴ was taken to mean the voice of the Holy Spirit. Hence the descent of a dove upon Jesus. But this merely explains the form of the vision. As to its substance, inasmuch as the Christians, who were anointed like the Christ with the Holy Spirit,⁵ were supposed to receive this spirit at their baptism, it seemed natural to think that Jesus had also received it when he underwent this ceremony. And nothing seemed more probable than that he, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel,⁶ should have received his call in a vision. Perhaps we should add that apparently many of the Jews expected that the Christ, though already born and existing somewhere on earth, would remain unknown to every one,⁷ — would not even know what he was himself, until Elijah came to anoint him and to make him known to all men. Then, again, to the early Christians the following reasoning would be conclusive : Before his baptism Jesus had never manifested, and cannot therefore have ever had, any superhuman gifts. After his baptism he began his public career, and soon appeared as the Christ. Something must have happened, then, at the moment of his baptism, to change him from an ordinary man into the Messiah. Or, looking at the thing from another point of view, John had consecrated him as a subject of the kingdom of God ; but he

¹ Luke iii. 21.

² Acts x. 38.

³ Genesis i. 2.

⁴ Song of Solomon ii. 12.

⁵ 1 John ii. 20, 27.

⁶ Isaiah vi.; Jeremiah i.; Ezekiel i.

⁷ Compare John vii. 27.

came up out of the water as its king. How could this be, had not God chosen the very moment when John was baptizing Jesus to fulfil that prophetic assurance that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon the Messiah?¹ And this explanation also solved the problem presented by his entirely unique personality, his grandeur and exaltation above all men.²

But if this is how the story came into existence, it obviously rests on a system of interpretation and a set of ideas which we cannot accept. To estimate it fairly, we must remember that in those days no systematic study of the laws of the human mind had been made, and the quickly-responsive and swiftly-kindled enthusiasm of the Oriental character fostered the illusion that God usually imparted his highest gifts suddenly.³ To us, however, it seems necessarily to follow from the laws of human nature that man's spiritual development must be gradual in every case, including that of Jesus, and cannot proceed by leaps or supernatural gusts of inspiration. Moreover, though the whole scene is in perfect harmony with the Israelite's conception of the universe, neither our knowledge of Nature nor our knowledge of God suffers us to conceive of the heavens opening to let the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, and the voice of God, pass through! It is true that even Mark himself represents the whole thing as a vision; but in the mouth of the Biblical writers a vision means something very different from what we should call an illusion. It means something which really occurred, though visible only to the enlightened eye of him to whom the vision was vouchsafed.⁴ Nor can we believe that Jesus ever had visions. His mind was so clear and healthy, his temperament so firm and uniform, his self-control so complete and invincible, that we cannot conceive of his being subject to those ecstatic transports, that more or less morbid nervous exaltation, that passive submission to a vivid imagination, in which visions take their rise.⁵ Then we must observe that the voice from heaven utters words taken from two passages from the Old Testament, both of which the Christians applied to the Messiah, but which had not really the slightest connection with each other. The first, "Thou art my Son!"⁶—or, in full, as we shall presently see, "Thou art my Son, this day

¹ Isaiah xi. 2.

² See p. 41.

³ Numbers xi. 25; 1 Samuel x. 6, 10, xvi. 13, xix. 20, 23; 2 Kings ii. 9 ff.; Matthew iv. 1; Acts ii. 2-4, viii. 17, 39, *et seq.*

⁴ 2 Kings vi. 17; 2 Corinthians xii. 2, 3.

⁵ Compare Numbers xii. 6-8; Deuteronomy xxxiv. 10.

⁶ Psalm ii. 7.

have I begotten thee!" — refers to the ideal of the Israelitish king; the other, — "My beloved in whom I am well pleased!"¹ — to the servant of God, or the consecrated Israel.² Finally, this story of the baptism is inconsistent with the sequel of the history; for even after the baptism Jesus did not appear as the Messiah for a considerable time, nor did he remind John of what is here said to have taken place on an occasion when it would have been entirely to the purpose for him to have done so.³ In a word, it is perfectly easy to explain the origin of this story from the faith of the early Christians, but quite impossible to attach any historical value to it.

The first Gospel modifies the picture, and with no great dexterity. In Mark, as we have seen, the opening of the heavens, the descent of the Spirit as a dove, and the voice of God are represented as taking place in a vision. In Luke, who elsewhere converts a vision into a palpable fact, they become events perceptible to all present. In Matthew it is still a vision, but one vouchsafed to John, and not to Jesus; for the voice does not say, "Thou art," as addressing Jesus, but "*This is* my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," — as addressing John concerning Jesus.⁴ We have already pointed out the inconsistency between this and the preceding verses, according to which John had already recognized Jesus as the Messiah as soon as he saw him. The whole representation is evidently confused and inverted. It might have been more reasonable to represent John as having bowed down before Jesus *after* the baptism and the miraculous sign that followed; and, accordingly, the "Gospel of the Hebrews" gives yet another version of the affair. "When the people were baptized, Jesus also came, and was baptized by John. And as he came up out of the water the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit in the form of a dove come down and enter into him. And there came a voice from heaven saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son; in thee am I well pleased!' And again, 'This day have I begotten thee!' And immediately the place about them was lightened by a great fire [a fire kindled in the Jordan,⁵ as we are told elsewhere]. And when John (who had not seen the dove or heard the voice, which were for Jesus alone) perceived the fire, he said to Jesus, 'Who art

¹ Isaiah xlii. 1. Compare Matthew xii. 18; Luke iv. 18, 19; Acts iv. 27.

² Compare Matthew xvii. 5 (Mark ix. 7; Luke ix. 35); 2 Peter i. 17.

³ Matthew xi. 2-6.

⁴ Matthew iii. 17.

⁵ Compare Isaiah lxiv. 2.

thou, Lord?' And again a voice from heaven said to him, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!' Then John fell down on his face before him and said, 'I pray thee, Lord, do thou baptize me!' But Jesus restrained him, saying, 'Let it be, for thus must all that has been prophesied of me be fulfilled.'

We shall not dwell upon this matter further. History does not tell us that any thing special occurred at the baptism of Jesus. The fact that John went on, as before, preaching and baptizing, and never directed his hearers to Jesus; and that his school continued its independent existence, expecting the dawn of the Messianic age, in fasting and prayer, after Jesus had begun his work, — this speaks clearly enough.

We have seen the formative power of legend at work, and can well understand that when once engaged upon this subject it would not soon relinquish it. This much is certain, that however strangely the early Christians were mistaken in supposing that Jesus first received the Spirit when he had come to man's estate, and received it mechanically and at one definite moment, they were not mistaken in the main point of their faith; namely, that Jesus was a man entrusted by God with an overflowing wealth of the fairest spiritual gifts, and was truly inspired, led, and governed by God's holy spirit. What the prophets had only possessed in part was given in all its fulness to Jesus. This thought is beautifully expressed, though under a somewhat fantastic form, in another fragment of the "Gospel of the Hebrews," so often mentioned already. "And it came to pass, when the Lord had come up out of the water, that the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit came down upon him, and rested on him, saying, 'My Son, in all the prophets have I looked forth to thee, that thou shouldst come, and that I should find in thee my place of rest. For thou art my place of rest; thou art my first-born Son, who rules to eternity!'"

CHAPTER IX.

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK.

MATTHEW IV 12-25; VIII. 14-16.¹

JOHN had transferred the scene of his activity to Peræa, perhaps because he was impeded or threatened in Judæa, perhaps for some other reason. But if, when he left the Roman province and escaped from the jurisdiction of the Roman authorities, he imagined that he would be safe on the territory of Herod Antipas and would be able to work on undisturbed, then he was wofully mistaken. At the command of the prince he was suddenly thrown into chains, and, before his followers knew any thing about it or had time to make any attempt to rescue him, he was carried off under an armed escort to the fortress of Machærus, east of the Dead Sea, at a distance of about twenty miles from the Jordan.

What was the reason for this deed of violence? Probably Herod was afraid of John's influence on the masses. These gatherings of the people might easily lead to insurrections, and he thought it well to take precautionary measures. Such at least is the reason assigned by Josephus, and there is much to be said for his version of the affair. The Messianic movement, we must remember, bore a political character. Excited by the prospect of the kingdom of God being founded, the multitude might easily conceive the idea of hastening the event by deposing Antipas or expelling the Romans. For the same reason when, some time afterwards, the person and preaching of Jesus had powerfully excited the Messianic expectation in Galilee, Herod attempted to take his life also.²

The Gospels give a different account. John, they say, had rebuked Herod for an evil deed.³ Herod had been on a visit to his half-brother, who was also called Herod, — not Philip, as Mark says, — and had fallen in love with his wife Herodias. She was an ambitious woman, and was tortured by the thought that her husband wore no crown; so she and Herod Antipas secretly agreed to release themselves from their present consorts and marry each other. When Antipas returned to his

¹ Mark i. 14-39; Luke iv. 14, 15, 31-v. 11.² Luke xiii. 31.³ Matthew xiv. 3, 4 (Mark vi. 17, 18; Luke iii. 19, 20).

residence at Tiberias, his wife, who had in some way discovered the plot, managed to find an excuse for escaping to her father, the Arabian king Aretas. Soon after this, to the indignation of all right-thinking Israelites, the proposed marriage was contracted. For this offence, according to the Evangelists, John rebuked the prince severely, and was thrown into prison in revenge.

But this is very improbable, for as long as the Baptist was at large it is not likely that he ever came into personal contact with Herod. Perhaps the Gospels confound the cause of his death¹ with that of his imprisonment.

Jesus was probably still in the neighborhood of the Jordan when he received the news that a tyrant's hand had been laid on the herald of God's kingdom, and had interrupted that work which should have ended only with the establishment of the kingdom itself! He could have no hesitation as to his own course now. He had long desired to work directly for the kingdom of God, and this news decided him. He could not have held back long under any circumstances, but now all hesitation was at an end. He returned at once to Galilee to take up the work of John. For in every respect that work was far from its completion. Israel was still unprepared for the coming of the Lord. The call to repentance had not yet found its way to all the sons of Abraham. Above all, the kingdom of God was not yet founded. Should the task remain unfinished for want of some one to take it up, the result of John's preaching would be swallowed up like a stream in the sand, and absolute failure would overtake his more than heroic efforts. In vain would he have resolved to be more than a prophet of better days, more than the messenger of a golden age to come; in vain would he have striven by his own bold deed of faith to hasten the dawn of that better time!

Jesus could not endure the thought. The moment had now come for him to act. The path was plain. God summoned him! He could have no doubt except as to the method he should adopt; and after what he had seen in the last few weeks or months he need not hesitate long even as to this.

He would not begin his work in the wilderness. He himself had no need of rigorous abstinence and mortification, and attached small value to them for others. His heart drew him to his fellow-men. He would not wait for them

¹ See chapter xxii. p. 270.

to come to him, but would seek them out himself. Nor would he fix his abode in Judæa. He had perhaps seen a good deal of the dark side of life in Judæa recently. The whole district took its tone from Jerusalem, the headquarters of orthodoxy. There formalism, worship of the letter, narrowness, spiritual pride,—in a word, all the characteristic failings of Judaism,—reached their greatest height. Jesus had evidently conceived a strong aversion to Judæa, and long afterwards the thought of going to Jerusalem filled him with such apprehension that he only resolved to take the journey after long hesitation and with the darkest forebodings. Then of course he was naturally attached to the land of his birth, and preferred the district in which he had lived so long to any other. In Galilee he was at home.

It has often been suggested that Jesus returned to Galilee as a matter of prudence, to escape the plots of Herod. But at this time he was quite unknown, and had therefore nothing to fear. It is true that his taking up the work of John might ultimately expose him to the utmost danger, but Galilee was itself in the territory of Antipas, and, indeed, he settled near his capital.

For reasons easily understood, he determined not to begin his work in so secluded a spot as Nazareth. Not that this place was so completely cut off from the world, or its inhabitants so narrow-minded and uncultivated, as is usually maintained. The populousness of the district makes such a supposition unlikely, and the culture of the Nazarene carpenter's family furnishes an instance to the contrary.¹ Still the situation of the place was not favorable to the purpose of Jesus. There was too little intercourse with strangers there, too little interchange of thought, for it to offer a suitable basis for his work. For this purpose he chose one of the centres of Galilæan life,—not the luxurious Tiberias, but the thrifty Capernaum. An additional reason for this choice was that he could hardly expect to find much faith in Nazareth, for the people there were too much accustomed to him.

Capernaum was situated on the western coast of the Galilæan Sea, called also the Sea of Gennesareth, or Tiberias. The exact site is uncertain. Nature was no less lovely and fertile here than in the district in which Jesus had spent his early life. The lake itself, through which the Jordan flows, is about fourteen miles long and six miles broad, and is almost completely shut in by mountains, which rise to a considerable

¹ See pp. 88, 91, 92.

height, especially to the south and east. Its clear waters, transparent to the bottom, are generally calm and smooth, but are sometimes agitated by violent storms. Fish were exceedingly abundant in it, and it was therefore traversed day by day in every direction by a host of fishing-boats that covered its surface. The eastern shore is desolate, but the western shore — on which Tarichæa, with its forty thousand inhabitants, Hamath or Emmaus, Tiberias, the capital of Herod Antipas, Magdala, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum were situated — is said by travellers to be a perfect paradise, and is declared by Josephus to be by far the most beautiful and fertile spot in Galilee. This is pre-eminently true of “the land of Gennesareth,” — a plain which stretches upwards from Magdala (about five miles north of Tiberias), where the hills retreat from the lake in the form of a semi-circle. This plain, in which some geographers place Capernaum, while others think it was further north,¹ was said to be so rich and varied in its products that it seemed as though Nature had challenged the cold, the hot, and the temperate climates to bring all their best products there and contend for the supremacy! Throughout ten months of the year ripe grapes and figs were gathered, and though the fruit-trees were so luxuriant, varied, and abundant, they could not carry away the palm from the magnificent wheat crops.

Capernaum itself was situated on the commercial highway that led from Syria to the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt. Moreover, it commanded the carrying trade to and from the opposite shore, which had belonged to Philip till his death, — an event which took place about this time, — and was then added to Syria.² For these reasons an excise office was established there, and a Roman garrison was stationed there, perhaps to protect or support the officers.

What a contrast between the entrancing scenery and the busy surroundings amidst which Jesus established himself and the lonely wilderness which was the scene of John's first preaching! The choice throws a strong light upon the divergent characters of the two men. Yet Jesus came before his hearers with the same message as that of his predecessor, though the promise of the near approach of God's kingdom, and the demand for repentance, came with a very different sound from his lips. And though the short epitome of his preaching given by the Evangelists is the same as that of John, — “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

¹ See Map V.

² See pp. 3, 4.

— we are not to suppose that Jesus used the same language or expressions as did his predecessor. However much he availed himself, when addressing the people, of what he had heard during his intercourse with John, he always retained his originality. The meaning of the statement in the Gospels doubtless is that Jesus came forward with the same avowed and definite purpose as his predecessor had had, and openly represented his own work as the continuation of John's.

Our knowledge of the course of events, as sketched above, is chiefly due to the first Gospel, which shows us far more distinctly than either Luke or Mark that the news of John's imprisonment was the immediate cause of Jesus taking up the work and beginning to preach at Capernaum. But though we have no hesitation in accepting this account, which is supported by various considerations, we cannot be so sure about some other matters.

Only to mention a single point: the time at which Jesus began his public life cannot be fixed with accuracy, and we must be content with knowing that it was certainly not later than the early spring of A. D. 34.¹ We are absolutely without reliable evidence as to the age which he had reached. Luke says that he was about thirty years old when he was baptized.² But, in the first place, that word "about" leaves a considerable margin undecided; nor can we tell what time elapsed between the baptism and the public appearance of Jesus; and, in the second place, the statement itself was as little based on real knowledge, and deserves as little confidence, as the supposition of John that Jesus was between forty and fifty.³ Luke simply means to say that Jesus had not long attained to manhood. As for ourselves we can hardly even make a guess. There was no fixed age at which public teachers assumed their office among the Jews; and even had there been any rule on the subject, neither Jesus nor any other prophet would have suffered himself to be bound by it. All we can say is that Jesus was certainly not aged; for his impetuous spirit,⁴ the close connection he retained with his family,⁵ and the manner in which the Nazarenes thought of and acted towards him,— speaking of him as one who had but recently left the paternal home,⁶ — all argue against such a supposition. On the other hand, his

¹ See pp. 10, 96.

² Luke iii. 23.

³ John viii. 57.

⁴ Compare, for example, Matthew xi. 20 ff., xxi. 12, xxii. 13 ff.

⁵ Matthew xii. 46.

⁶ Matthew xiii. 54 ff.

matured experience and manifold knowledge of human nature,¹ together with the position he assumes towards his people and his disciples,² forbid us to think of him as youthful. There is no prospect of our ever gaining further knowledge on this point.

It is equally vain to inquire exactly how Jesus began his work. Did he first address himself to a small circle of acquaintances, or did he teach in public from the first? The latter is more probable. It is not likely that Jesus began to work in secret among a few individuals; for, though we shall presently see how gladly he would toil to restore a single wanderer to the path of virtue, and how to the very last he devoted his thoughts and powers to the good of single individuals, yet, after all, his message was destined in the first instance for the whole people of Israel. We shall presently see that publicity was as much in keeping with the character of the age as with the purposes of Jesus; and he could not have been without opportunities of speaking to the people. At present we need only observe that the account of the calling of the disciples, which Matthew and Mark both of them place at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, confirms us in the opinion we have expressed.

The account referred to is as follows: —

Not long after Jesus had settled at Capernaum and begun to preach, he was walking, on a certain day, by the sea of Gennesareth, and saw Simon and Andrew, the sons of the fisherman Jona, busy at work. He stood still, and summoned them to join him, and leave their calling for a nobler task, — “Come with me, and I will make you fishers of men!” They obeyed him at once, and left their nets to follow him. A little further on he saw two other fishermen, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, busy mending the nets with their father in his boat. He called them also, and they obeyed. Rising from the boat, and leaving their father with his hired assistants behind, they joined themselves to Jesus and the others.

The impression made upon us by this narrative certainly is that the connection between Jesus and these four disciples was formed on the spot, and without any thing to lead up to it. A similar representation is found in the Old Testament, with regard to Elijah and Elisha.³ But it stands to reason that they must really have had some mutual knowledge of

¹ Matthew xiii. 12, 19 ff., *et seq.*

² Matthew x. 24, 25, 37, xi. 16, xxiii. 8, 10.

³ 1 Kings xix. 19-21.

each other, and that Jesus had already excited some attention. The words in which he summoned them are unmistakably genuine, and imply that he was already known to some extent as a public teacher. It was in this capacity, and this alone, that they joined him. We must also suppose that Jesus, on his side, had already noted these four men as likely to make earnest and zealous preachers of the kingdom of God. Such mutual acquaintance is most easily explained on the supposition that Jesus had already been living some time in Capernaum,—as Matthew, but not Mark, informs us was the case. It is also very possible that the Gospels make the calling of the sons of Zebedee follow too quickly upon that of the sons of Jona; but it is highly probable that these four were really the first disciples of Jesus.

This simple figure of speech about “catching men”¹ was afterwards elaborated into an emblematic account of the calling of the first disciples, which ran as follows:—

Jesus was preaching by the edge of the sea, and the number of his hearers gradually increased until those behind pressed forward upon those in front, and compelled Jesus to look about for some more convenient place to sit in. Now it so happened that there were two boats lying empty on the strand, while the fishermen to whom they belonged were washing their nets. Jesus got into one of them, and calling its owner, Simon, begged him to push off a little. Then he sat down in the stern of the boat, and spoke to the people who stood upon the shore. When he had ended his address, he turned to Simon and told him to put out to sea and cast his net. “Master,” he replied, “it will avail me nothing, for we have not caught any thing all the night; but if you wish it, we can try once more.” But, behold! when he had cast the net it was filled so full that it began to break. Then they beckoned to their companions, James and John, in the second boat, to come to help them. They drew the net up cautiously to empty it, and the two boats were laden till they were ready to sink. Filled with dread by this overwhelming proof that Jesus was a messenger of God, Simon Peter fell down upon his knees and cried, “Depart from me, Lord! for I am a sinful man.” He was afraid that the presence of Jesus would bring some fearful judgment upon him;² for he was not one of the devout, but simply an ordinary man of the world. And both the other fishermen, and, indeed, all who were present, were filled with the same terror. But

¹ Compare Proverbs xi. 30 b.

² Compare 1 Kings xvii. 18.

Jesus quieted their fears. "Fear not," he said to Simon, "henceforth thou shalt catch men." Then they gave up their occupation and every thing they had to follow Jesus.

We must certainly take this narrative as having a symbolical meaning. How far we can safely go in this direction is not so certain. This much is clear, however, that the unsuccessful fishing represents the natural incapacity of the disciples, and their marvellous subsequent success the fruits of their preaching as emissaries of Jesus. We are tempted to suppose that when the legend represents the disciples as casting their nets near the shore to no purpose, but finding abundant success in the open sea, it refers to the meagre results of the preaching to the Jews and the countless multitudes won among the heathen. Even if this is going too far, we may very well believe that the objection urged by Simon represents the Jewish narrowness which the Apostles had to overcome, and that the putting out into the deep waters, where they take such a marvellous draught of fish, typifies their mission to the whole world.¹ But whatever may be thought of the details, it is quite certain that this story is an imitation or working up of the previous one. The calling of the four fishermen is the original, and the miraculous draught of fishes a copy. This belief is confirmed, if it needs confirmation, by the occurrence of a similar emblematic or miraculous story, of closely analogous meaning, in the fourth Gospel. Simon Peter and the sons of Zebedee are again the chief actors, but the time is changed. The event is placed after the resurrection of Jesus, when the Apostles had to begin their task as preachers of the kingdom of God.²

And here we must say a few words about these emblematic stories in general. They were very common among the Christian communities of the first century, and have left abundant traces in the Gospels. The consequence is that we are always coming across representations or accounts of things which excite our attention by their very singular character, and by invariably containing something marvellous, often something impossible. But when we examine them more closely, we discover that they are only intended to set forth some idea or some truth, and are in fact elaborated figures of speech or emblems. Such a mode of exposition strikes us as very strange, but it was common enough in the East; for these men could not deal with abstract ideas, but

¹ Acts x. 9 ff.

² John xxi. 1-14.

always clothed their thoughts in some visible form, and drew pictures instead of arguing and proving. They endeavored to work upon the feelings through the imagination and not, as we generally do, through the intellect; and it was from the resources of a luxuriant imagination that they borrowed the colors with which to paint their pictures. No one will deny that this style of address or narrative is better calculated than any other to excite and fascinate the attention. The first preachers of Christianity, moreover, were specially led to adopt this mode of expression by the style of teaching usually selected by their Master. He generally taught in parables, and had, for instance, worked out this very image of the "fishers of men" in the story of the great net that gathered in every kind of fish.¹ The extreme love of emblems and parables, which the believers of the first centuries so constantly displayed, dates from the earliest period of Christianity.² The last book of the New Testament consists of one unbroken series of these emblematic pictures.

But we must be careful to distinguish, in this connection, between the original narrators and our Evangelists. The former were, of course, fully aware of the meaning of the figures they selected, but the latter had often lost their true significance and accepted them in the literal sense. Hence, in taking them up into their Gospels they often omitted some essential point, laid too great stress upon another, or even made incongruous additions. It may well be believed that it is no easy task to recover the true and ancient meaning of these stories.

While Jesus was thus drawing a few personal disciples round him, he lost no opportunity of addressing more numerous hearers. We still have an account of a certain Sabbath that he spent at Capernaum, and on which he went to the synagogue, accompanied by his four disciples, to address the people. The impression he made was overpowering. It was not the curiosity roused by an almost unknown preacher, or the simple eloquence with which he spoke, or the glorious future that formed his subject, so much as the glow of his intense conviction, the sacred passion of his inspiration, and his whole attitude towards the recognized authorities, that excited such amazement. Even the most eminent of the Scribes invariably appealed in confirmation of

¹ Matthew xiii. 47, 48.

² See, for example, 1 Corinthians v. 7; Revelation i. 13-16, &c.

their assertions to some passage of Scripture, to some traditional saying, or to the authority of some great teacher. But this new preacher seemed to speak on his own authority, as though he had a higher right than learning or study could confer; nay, as though he were the equal of those prophets of old who received their messages direct from the Most High.¹

An example of the deep impression made by the presence and the words of Jesus is furnished by what follows. In the synagogue there happened to be a man possessed by a demon. He had not escaped the general excitement; and when Jesus had ended, and every one began to talk over what he had said, the evil spirit fell upon its victim, and he leaped up and shrieked, "Ha! what have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Are you come to cast me and my fellow-demons into the fire of Gehenna? I know who you are! You are the Holy One of God!" All eyes were turned to the spot whence these words arose; but Jesus, looking steadily at the man, and addressing the demon in a tone of stern rebuke, said to him, "Silence! come out of him!" The man fell, shrieking and convulsed, upon the ground, and the evil spirit had gone out of him. Then he stood up, delivered from his tormentor and unharmed. The amazement of all present knew no bounds. What could it mean? Were ever such words of might heard before? Even the very devils obeyed when he commanded! And the news of what had taken place spread like fire through the whole country round.

It was but natural that Jesus should leave the synagogue as soon as possible after this event. Besides, the evening was already closing in. And so, accompanied by the four disciples, henceforth inseparably attached to him, he went to the house of Simon, who was a married man, and whose mother-in-law lived with him. It happened that this mother-in-law was ill in bed at the time with fever, and as soon as Jesus heard it he went up to her, took her hand (Luke adds that he rebuked the fever, which was very violent) and raised her up. The fever left her at once, and in grateful joy she began to prepare the evening meal. But these two cures were not all; for as soon as the sun was set and the Sabbath over, a host of sick and possessed were brought to him. The whole city came out to see him, and a great crowd collected round the door. He healed many sufferers from various ailments, and expelled a number of evil spirits. The

¹ Compare Matthew vii. 28, 29.

latter knew that he was the Messiah, and he had to forbid them to speak, for they sometimes cried out, “ You are the Son of God !”

What are we to think of this story ? It need hardly be said that we cannot accept it as it stands. We utterly disbelieve in actual devils living in men ; it is absurd to suppose that these spirits recognized and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, when we know that he himself had no such idea as yet ; and we cannot believe that all the inhabitants of the city brought out their sick, and that Jesus played the part of a medicine-man ! But, on the other hand, it would be going too far utterly to reject the whole story. It is quite possible that Jesus preached in the synagogue at Capernaum, and indeed, even if it were not expressly stated, we should almost take for granted that he made himself heard in the house of prayer before he had been settled long in the city ; nor would there be any more suitable or probable place in which he could utter his first exhortation. Again, the amazement he is said to have caused, and the deep impression he created, are only what we should expect.

We may go still further. It would be a mistake to deny that Jesus ever healed those “ possessed by devils.” We must remember that in those days, and especially among the Jews, this “ possession ” was a kind of epidemic. Josephus makes repeated mention of it. The causes of its prevalence cannot be fixed with certainty ; but we may well believe that the state of nervous tension caused by the depressing circumstances of the times, together with the feverish expectation of deliverance, and the consequent religious revival,¹ was a powerful ally of the prevalent superstition,— and these morbid spiritual phenomena are very infectious. “ Possession ” was at bottom a nervous derangement, which showed itself sometimes in temporary or permanent insanity, sometimes in fits of deep depression, sometimes in convulsive attacks at regularly recurring intervals, and sometimes even in loss of control over the members, resulting in temporary deafness, blindness, or paralysis. Now it was customary in ancient times to ascribe both madness and epilepsy to the immediate influence or actual presence in the body of the patient of some deity or spirit. It was for this reason that epilepsy was called the *morbus sacer*, or “ sacred disease.” A similar belief prevailed among the Israelites ; for during the early centuries of their renewed national existence they had borrowed an

¹ See pp. 4, 6, 96–99, 105, 108.

elaborate belief in angels and demons from the Persians, and had worked it out more or less independently themselves. The Jews, then, definitely believed that evil spirits, subject to Satan, dwelt in the bodies of the "possessed," and tortured them; and to their influence they ascribed all the phenomena above referred to, and in general all diseases that seemed strange or mysterious, including perhaps the ague, which is still a riddle to the medical men of our own times. Thus Luke can say of Jesus, as he stood by the bed of Simon's mother-in-law, that he rebuked the ague as if it had had a personal existence,—as if it were a demon and had to be expelled.

It is true that, above four centuries earlier than the time of which we are speaking, the great Hippocrates of Cos had laid the firm foundations of medical science among the Greeks, and had combated this very superstition in his work "On the Sacred Disease." But the Jews were much behind their age in this matter. They fled to the general refuge of ignorance, therefore, and ascribed a supernatural origin to most diseases. The necessary consequence was that they neglected natural remedies in favor of magical incantations or elixirs, and other such devices. And so there were a number of exorcists (or expellers of devils) in the country, and some of them, of course, were more successful than others. The Essenes appear to have paid especial attention to the art of exorcism. Josephus tells us that Solomon had received power over the demons from God, so that he could heal the sick, and that he had collected and handed down the magic formulæ of exorcism. "This art," continues he, "still flourishes among us greatly." The Talmud and later authorities also attribute to Solomon a book on this branch of the healing art, though really the idea of possession was not so much as dreamed of in his time. Josephus tells us that in the neighborhood of Machærus a root called baäras is to be found; that it is like a flame of fire in color; that it throws out shining rays by night; that any one who gathers it, without certain fanciful and grotesque precautions which he rehearses, is sure to lose his life, but that it is an infallible means of expelling the evil spirits which have taken possession of human beings.

We must not be too hard on the superstitious contemporaries of Jesus; for we must remember that, however absurd we may think the belief in the immediate connection between unclean spirits and human beings, and the influence of evil

powers upon human life, these beliefs maintained themselves for centuries in the Christian Church. In remote country districts, and the neglected quarters of our great cities, people still believe in witches and wizards, and attribute the diseases of children or animals to magic. But not so very long ago the belief was universal. Almost two centuries after the Reformation, Balthazar Bekker, a pastor of Amsterdam, published his celebrated work, “The Enchanted World” (1691–94), in Holland,—at that time the centre of enlightenment and science. The purpose of the book was to root out the superstitious belief in witches, enchantment, and all such things, to which so many innocent lives were yearly sacrificed; and the result was that Bekker was denounced as an infidel and a blasphemer by almost every one, including his fellow-pastors and even the professors of the day, while the ecclesiastical authorities dismissed him from his post.

Now when we examine the stories of “possession” contained in the Gospels,¹ we find that the symptoms they describe agree very well with what may still be observed in the case of persons suffering from similar nervous affections. So far, then, we need not scruple to accept them as historical. But we must be discriminating; for in the most detailed accounts of exorcisms certain features may be traced which warn us clearly enough to adopt a figurative rather than a literal interpretation,—features on which the history of Jesus throws no light, and which unmistakably betray the age of the Apostles. The consideration of these stories we shall defer to Book II. It would, however, be quite equally rash and uncritical to apply the symbolical interpretation indiscriminately to all the Gospel accounts of demoniacal possession and its cure. There is certainly some historical foundation for them. We have no sufficient reason and therefore no right entirely to reject them. If Jesus really did restore some of these sufferers to themselves, to their friends, and to social life, we can readily understand how misconceptions, exaggerations, and unconscious inventions would gather round the fact, and crowd our Gospels with accounts of miraculous healings. Again, such events would be quite enough to account for the general attention almost immediately fixed on Jesus, and for the great excitement produced by his appearance. Though he never adopted any peculiarity in his outer mode of life, as John did, yet these cures, effected as they were without any of the superstitious posturing of the professional exorcists, would be enough to

E.g. Mark ix. 17, 18 (Matthew xvii. 15; Luke ix. 39).

spread his fame far and wide. Finally, such healings are not inexplicable, still less impossible. Nervous affections are still amenable, in many cases, to control by moral power, by the ascendancy of any one respected by the patient for instance, or any thing that rouses his own dormant energy of self-control. How much more must this have been the case when the disease was regarded as the effect of "possession," and certain men were firmly believed to have secret means of cure, or to be specially favored by God with power of casting out the devil! We must remember that these beliefs were shared by the sufferers themselves, and would act as a strong ally to that sense of moral power and "authority" which the commanding presence of Jesus inspired. We can well believe that though Jesus used no magic form of words, the fame that he had acquired, the glance of his eye, and his commanding "come forth," were often successful in producing the desired result.

It is much more doubtful whether Jesus ever cured a fever, as he is said to have done in this story. But even this we cannot pronounce impossible. There are many instances on record of fevers having been cured, even in modern times, by the bare word of one who had perfect reliance on himself, and in whose power the patient thoroughly believed. How much more likely would it be in ancient times for such a result to follow the word of a prophet, who was supposed to stand in some special relation to God! But there is nothing to confirm this special cure of Simon's mother-in-law.

We cannot tell whether Jesus ever failed in his attempts, which were probably far from frequent, to cure demoniacs,¹ nor whether any of those whom he had restored afterwards relapsed.² There is nothing intrinsically improbable in either supposition. Again, it has often been asked what the opinion of Jesus himself concerning the sufferers really was. Was he so far a child of the times as to attribute their sufferings to evil spirits dwelling in them? Or did he address the supposed demons in accordance with the needs of the patients, since that was the only means by which he could help them? The former supposition is by far the more probable in itself. Indeed, in the other case, there would have been a want of reality in his position which would have gone far to rob him of the confidence so essential to success.

It must not be forgotten that we have only defended the

¹ Compare Matthew xvii. 16, 19 (Mark ix. 18, 28; Luke ix. 40); Acts xix. 13-16; and Mark vi. 5.

² Compare Matthew xii. 43-45 (Luke xi. 24-26).

healing of demoniacs in general as worthy of belief, and have by no means affirmed that the special cure said to have been effected on that particular Sabbath at Capernaum is certainly historical. We can only say that it is not incredible in itself; for, after all, it is quite possible that the story was originally attached to the account of this first preaching as a simple type of the moral power exercised by Jesus on the minds of men. When he spoke as one “having authority,” the consciences of his hearers were aroused, and all impurity of heart and disposition — every evil spirit — must give way. There is all the more reason to question the historical accuracy of the story, because it contains, or is immediately followed by, certain unhistorical touches to which we have already called attention. In the first place, there is the monstrous exaggeration of the statement that the people brought all who were sick of any disease to Jesus, and that he healed them. These short and comprehensive general assertions constantly recur,¹ and are never to be trusted. If all these statements were literally true, there would soon have been no sick people left in Galilee or in Jerusalem; but the Gospels always bring them upon the scene again, and so contradict themselves. Then again, the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah by the demoniac in the temple is a fiction which sprang from the belief that Jesus had come forward as the Messiah from the first, and that the demons dwelling in the sufferers had more than human knowledge. On the same supposition the Jews ascribed to these spirits their own belief that, when the Messianic kingdom was established, Satan and all his subordinates would be hurled into the fire of Gehenna, to be punished everlasting. Thus when the demons see Jesus they cry out, “Are you going to torture us now, before the time, before the last day?”²

The account of the commencement of the ministry of Jesus at Capernaum ends with his sudden departure from the place. When the evening closed, the multitudes went home to rest; and early in the morning, when all around him slept, Jesus rose from his bed, left the house without rousing any of its inmates, and went out of the city to a solitary spot — a desert place as the Evangelists express it — to pray. As soon as it

¹ Matthew iv. 23, 24, viii. 16, ix. 35, xii. 15, xiv. 14, 36, xv. 30, xix. 2, xxi. 14; Mark i. 32-34, 39, iii. 10, 11, vi. 55, 56; Luke iv. 40, 41. v. 15, 17, vi. 17-19. vii. 21, ix. 11.

² Matthew viii. 29.

was day, Simon and his other friends of course perceived that he was gone. They went in search of him, and when they found him urged him to return. "Every one is asking for you," they eagerly exclaimed. But Jesus refused to go back. He had left the city so early because he had determined to go and preach in other places in the neighborhood ; and he now began to carry out his resolution.

Such is the account in Mark. Now, according to this Gospel, Jesus only came to Capernaum the day before, and had therefore only spent that single Sabbath day in the city. That would be the reason why he did not get a house of his own, but spent the night in Simon's. This brings us to observe the extraordinary rapidity of motion which characterizes the narrative of the second Evangelist. His representations are generally hurried, and in the first chapter alone the word "immediately" occurs eleven or twelve times. Luke also mentions the departure of Jesus in the early morning, and Matthew tells us that after healing Simon's mother-in-law and other people he left Capernaum.¹ But Matthew clearly and expressly states, and Luke certainly implies, that Jesus had already definitely settled at the place, so that he must have made a longer stay than Mark allows. Such a supposition is certainly nearer the truth than the inexplicable haste which Mark implies. Since Luke has told us nothing of the calling of the four disciples, he makes the multitudes themselves seek out Jesus and endeavor to bring him back. This is highly improbable. He also makes Jesus answer, "I must bear the glad tidings of the approach of the Messianic age to other cities also. This is my mission."

Jesus, accordingly, now began his journey through Galilee. He entered the synagogues of the various places, and took every opportunity of proclaiming the kingdom of God. Magdala, Chorazin, and Bethsaida are especially mentioned among the places he visited, but we never find any allusion to his having been at the capital, Tiberias. He did not confine his visits to the cities on the shore of the lake, but travelled inland, came to Nazareth, and raised the voice of his preaching everywhere.² His field of labor was wide, brought him into contact with all kinds of people, and was all the more exhausting because he could not as yet share it with any fellow-workers. In this way we shall see him toiling on till he leaves Galilee on that journey to Jerusalem which was to cost his life. He always returned from these excursions to Caper-

¹ Matthew viii. 18.

² Matthew iv. 23 (Mark i. 39; Luke iv. 44).

naum, perhaps in search of that rest which was not to be found, however, even here ; perhaps simply because he had chosen this place as his abode, as the headquarters of his work, and his point of departure on each fresh journey.¹ Accordingly we shall often find him here again.

What gave him strength to bear the perpetual strain he found himself compelled to undergo ? We shall deal expressly with this question further on, but cannot refrain from observing here how beautifully and fittingly the second Gospel closes the account of his first public appearance, when it says that the next morning at the dawn of day Jesus went alone *to pray*. We cannot tell whence the writer derived this detail. He may have supplied it from his own imagination ; but, if so, we are willing to believe that his conjecture was a true one. We may well suppose that Jesus could not sleep that night. The day that had just closed was of such deep import for the cause to which he had consecrated his life ! His first public utterances had been crowned with so rich a promise of good results, and his success, for the time at least, was now made sure ! The strain upon his powers had been so great that both head and heart were too full for rest, and thoughts innumerable rushed in upon him in the stillness of the night. He must rise and go out into the open scenes of Nature. Then he bowed down his head and raised his heart to God with the prayer that this first success might be crowned by His richest blessing ; that he himself might not be too much elated by the enthusiasm he had inspired ; that the power to work unceasingly might never fail or leave him.

Such prayers as his are never left unanswered.

¹ Matthew ix. 1, xiii. 1, 36; Mark ii. 1, iii. 19, vii. 17.

CHAPTER X.

JESUS AS THE TEACHER OF HIS PEOPLE.

MATTHEW VII. 24-27, XIII. 1-28, 31-35, 44-48, 51, 52, XIV. 13-21;
MARK IV. 26-29.¹

WHAT is the sacred place where thou dost teach ?
The grassy slope, the cornland vale, or beach,
The fisher's boat rocked on the heaving lake ?
The lowliest threshold and the busiest street
Are holy ground when trodden by thy feet,
For thou canst everywhere a temple make !

BY these words the poet means that Jesus neither required nor even asked for any specially holy place, any consecrated pulpit, but accepted every occasion offered him by daily life and every place in any degree suited to his purpose, and made it a holy temple by his presence and his words. Certainly this new teacher, who had first appeared at Capernaum, and was now journeying through the cities of Galilee, had not a touch of that consequential and pompous solemnity of manner upon which some orators rely for half their power. He took the fullest advantage of the ease and freedom rendered possible by the climate and the social institutions of the East ; and we find him sometimes addressing a little knot of hearers, sometimes preaching to a more or less numerous assembly,—at one time speaking in his own house,² at another in a neighbor's,³ perhaps at the friendly meal to which he has come as a guest ;⁴ and yet again in the highways,⁵ or in the ample market-place, at the gate of a city,⁶ or on a quiet walk through the open country,⁷ on the picturesque shores of the lake, or in a boat that rides at anchor.⁸ He even seems to prefer some place at a distance from the tumult of the cities, such as a grassy plain⁹ or the slope of a mountain,¹⁰ where he can address a tolerably numerous audience.¹¹

¹ Matthew xv. 32-38; Mark iv. 1-20, 30-34, vi. 30-44, viii. 1-9; Luke vi. 47-49, viii. 4-15, ix. 10-17, xiii. 18-21.

² Mark ii. 1, iii. 19, &c.

³ Matthew viii. 14; Luke x. 38, &c.

⁴ Luke vii. 36, xiv. 1, &c.

⁵ Luke xiii. 26; compare x. 10.

⁶ Mark vi. 56.

⁷ Matthew xvi. 13; Luke xi. 1, &c.

⁸ Matthew xiii. 1, 2; Mark ii. 13; Luke v. 1. See, also, p. 128.

⁹ Matthew xiv. 15, 19; compare vi. 30; Mark vi. 39.

¹⁰ Matthew v. 1, xv. 29.

¹¹ Matthew xiv. 21, xv. 38.

All this, however, does not alter the fact that the synagogues — those academies of Israel, those centres of the people's religious life — must have presented themselves to Jesus as the usual and the most appropriate places in which to speak of religious subjects,¹ especially as hardly a hamlet was without one, while each of the larger towns had several. It was in the synagogue that he uttered that discourse to which he owed his first success at Capernaum. The structure of these synagogues varied considerably, and some of them were splendidly adorned. Those of the little cities of Galilee, to which the visits of Jesus were almost entirely confined, were probably oblong buildings, varying in size, and generally provided with a colonnade. By far the greater part of the interior was occupied by the seats for the men and women, carefully separated from each other; then, further on, came the pulpit, and probably seats for the ruler of the synagogue and the elders; lastly, sunk into the wall that looked towards Jerusalem, or fixed upon it, was the chest which contained the sacred rolls. To these synagogues any one might come at the appointed hours (nine, twelve, and three o'clock) to offer his daily prayers.² Here the Law was read aloud, not only on the Sabbath, but on Mondays and Thursdays, when the markets were held, the courts of justice sat, the country people came into the cities, and the Pharisees kept fast.³ But the service of Saturday was, out of all comparison, the most important. First of all the prayers were uttered, in a standing posture, and in the language of the people; then a passage was read out of one of the five rolls of the Law, followed by a section from one of the eight prophetic rolls (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings,⁴ Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets from Hosea to Malachi). These passages of Scripture were expounded and applied, as well as read, and it was usual for one to read and another to interpret. In the afternoon the worshippers assembled again to read a shorter passage of Scripture, and often stayed on into the evening with lighted lamps. The congregation said *amen* to the prayers;⁵ and, though it was forbidden to interrupt the speaker, we may be sure that Oriental vivacity found some means of expressing occasional approval or dissent clearly enough. Of course the Scribes, who had studied at the University of Jerusalem, who had sat at the feet of celebrated teachers, and who still de-

¹ See pp. 130, 131, 137.

² Luke xviii. 12.

⁵ Compare 1 Corinthians xiv. 16.

² Matthew vi. 5.

⁴ See vol. i. p. 350.

voted their time and strength to the constant study of the Scripture, or perhaps of the Law alone, were most frequently requested to address the people after the reading of Scripture ; but every Israelite who had reached manhood, and was in full enjoyment of his ecclesiastical and civil rights, was qualified to speak in the synagogue. In the time of Jesus there was no trace as yet of any academical title or diploma which the leader of public worship must hold. Any one who frequently spoke in the synagogue,¹ especially if he gained some celebrity as a teacher, was saluted by the title of honor, — “ Rabbi,” or “ Master,” whether he had had a learned education or not.²

Jesus, then, took every occasion that came in his way, and especially availed himself of the admirable opportunities afforded by the synagogue, to preach what he had at heart to the people. With this general statement we must rest content, for his discourses and detached sayings have been preserved, collected, and handed down to us without any strict observance of time and place in their arrangement. This is only what we might fairly have expected. The oral tradition preceded the written ; and what could be more natural than to collect the similar discourses without reference to the intervals of time or space which separated them ? Indeed, our Evangelists themselves make very free with the time and place of the discourses in fitting them into their own framework. We will take a remarkable example. In the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew we possess an inestimable collection of short sayings and more extended discourses which the first Evangelist, or perhaps to a great extent the Apostle from whom his Gospel takes its name,³ had woven together ; but they were really uttered at various times and under various circumstances, and have no connection with each other. Matthew, however, represents Jesus as having delivered the whole collection at once on a mountain. Hence the name of “ Sermon on the Mount ” is given to this precious monument of the teaching of Jesus, and the legend has fixed upon “ the horns of Chattin ”⁴ as the place from which the sermon was delivered. Now the Evangelist had a special motive for fixing upon a mountain for this purpose. He intended to represent Jesus laying down the fundamental laws of the kingdom of heaven as the counterpart of Moses, who promulgated the constitution of the Old Covenant from Mount Sinai.⁵ Luke,

¹ Matthew xxiii. 7.

² See p. 30.

⁵ See vol. i. pp. 296, 299.

² Matthew viii. 19, ix. 11, xvii. 24, xxii. 16.

⁴ See the plan of Gennesareth in Map V.

on the other hand, not wishing Jesus to be regarded as a second Moses, or another lawgiver, just as deliberately makes the Master deliver this discourse on a plain.¹

In reproducing the teaching of Jesus, then, we must be on our guard. As a rule we need not pay much attention to the order of sequence observed in the Gospels. There are some few points as to which we may feel reasonably certain; for example, that many sayings which belong to the closing rather than the opening period of the ministry of Jesus have been put too early by the Evangelists, and that his more gloomy utterances fit best into the later part of his career.² Such points as these we shall try to keep in view, but for the rest shall generally take up the sayings of Jesus as opportunity occurs, without laying much stress on the order in which he uttered them. But first we must say a few words as to the general form and subject-matter, the spirit and contents of his teaching. We shall attempt to do so, adding illustrative examples, in this and the next three chapters.

Most of the specimens of the teaching of Jesus that we still possess are in the form of parables; that is to say, fictitious but not impossible stories or images, generally suggested by the incidents and usages of daily life, and destined to illustrate some special truth. To understand them fully we must first of all get a clear conception of the image, or the supposed event itself: the study of antiquities is an invaluable aid to us here. Then we must lay all the stress on the points of comparison, in which the lesson is contained, without attending too much to what is merely incidental to the form of the parable. The moral stories or sketches of character, as they may be called, which are only found in Luke, form a separate class of themselves.

Now the question is, how it comes to pass that we have so many more specimens of this kind of preaching than of any other? Did Jesus usually teach in parables;³ or is it simply that they were easier to remember and repeat than other forms of discourse? It may be urged that we have several specimens of the proverbial or epigrammatic style of teaching from his lips; that he showed a great love of throwing his sayings into the form of paradoxes; and that he must, from the nature of the case, have occasionally delivered long discourses or addresses,—but that all these forms of utterance were harder to remember than the parables, and have therefore oftener

¹ Luke vi. 17

² See p. 13.

³ Mark iv. 33, 34 (Matthew xiii. 34, 35).

been lost. All this may be perfectly true, but still Jesus does seem to have chosen the parable as his most frequent mode of teaching. The reason is simple and obvious. He had a special talent for making parables. Not that he took a pride in it. Such small-minded vanity was utterly foreign to him. But the images presented themselves so naturally that he was never at a loss for them. And, besides, this mode of teaching had several special advantages in itself. It excited and retained the attention of the hearers, and was always listened to with fresh delight. The images thus imprinted on the imagination, together with the lessons they taught, fixed themselves without effort on the memory, and were passed from mouth to mouth. Last, not least, they stimulated independent thought. A parable like a riddle excites curiosity and challenges the exercise of ingenuity. The speaker's meaning might be sometimes more and sometimes less obvious, but it always had to be looked for, and so required some effort on the hearer's part.

The Gospels themselves give another reason.¹ The disciples ask Jesus privately what was the meaning of one of his parables, and also why he adopts this indirect method of teaching. He answers, "It is granted to you to understand these new truths of the kingdom of God; but to the multitude I speak in parables that they may see and yet be blind, and may hear yet not understand." Then he strongly emphasizes these last words by a quotation from Isaiah, in which the prophet represents the fruitlessness of his preaching as designed by Yahweh himself.² Now such a reason as this, taken literally, is essentially absurd. No man in his senses would undertake to teach the people with the express purpose of not being understood; and to say that Jesus used figurative language for fear people might understand him and then repent and be forgiven³ would be a senseless slander. Nor is this what the Evangelists meant; but when they contemplated Israel's obstinate want of faith, they supposed that God must have foreordained the sad result, or else the words of Jesus would have met with more acceptance. There is, however a germ of truth in this view of the purpose of Jesus. He cannot have intended to be fully understood at once by every one. He must have known that some of the thoughts he uttered were so new, and in such direct conflict with the

¹ Matthew xiii. 10-17 (Mark iv. 10-12; Luke viii. 9, 10).

² Matthew xiii. 14, 15; compare Isaiah vi. 9, 10. See vol. ii. chap. xxiii. p. 248.

³ Mark iv. 12.

traditions and prejudices of his people, that they could not possibly accept them all at once. Had he spoken without metaphor he would have shocked his hearers too deeply to convince them. He was therefore obliged to be content for the present with shaking their fixed ideas and setting them to think. Nay, the only possible way of removing their religious prejudices was to enable them gradually to reach the meaning of his words, and so to understand the secrets of the kingdom of God by the exercise of their own powers ; for when a parable had thoroughly enlisted their sympathies in some simple case in which their prejudices were not at work, they gradually perceived that they had been induced to accept some great principle which was at variance with many of the convictions they had hitherto cherished. And yet they always felt its truth as far as they understood it, and were too deeply committed in their sympathies to be able to draw back, as its full meaning slowly opened out before them ; and when once a man has discovered the truth himself, that truth which no one else can *make* him see, he will readily relinquish all his cherished prejudices as misleading ; nay, he will do more ! But let Jesus himself tell us what : —

Once on a time a laborer was digging up his master's land when he happened to drive his spade or mattock a little deeper than usual, and struck upon something hard, that glittered as he drew up the spade. Then he dug down with a will, and threw the earth aside till his eyes were riveted by a great treasure of gold and silver and precious things ! It must have been buried there years, perhaps centuries ago, in time of war, and its owner had sunk into the grave without imparting his secret to any one. The fortunate discoverer was beside himself with delight. He covered up his treasure again so that no one would suspect that any thing was there, hastened to the owner of the field, and asked him what he would sell it for. As soon as he knew the sum required, he went and sold every thing he had ; sold the house and little plot of land on which perhaps his grandfather and great-grandfather had lived ; sold the furniture and the very tools he had learned to love as though they were living things ; had but one thought, one purpose, to scrape together the required sum ! At last he had it. He went to the farmer and bought the land. What were the sacrifices he had made to the treasure he had secured ?¹ “But the man was shamefully dishonest,” you will say. Perhaps so. Indeed, there is no doubt about it. But

¹ Matthew xiii. 44

that is not the point of comparison. The story is only meant to bring out the man's eagerness to sacrifice every thing, without reserve and without hesitation, for the treasure he had found.

Here is another form of the same :—

There was once a merchant who dealt in costly pearls (a travelling jeweller as we should express it) who longed to become famous in his trade. So he visited the pearl fisheries of the Persian Gulf and the Indian coasts in spring. Once on a time he entered a certain hut, and the fisherman to whom it belonged showed him a pearl so large, so clear, so perfectly rounded, that he had never seen its fellow. His eyes gleamed at the sight. What must he give for it? The fisher named his price. It may have been enormously high, but it was not dear. "Good! Keep it for me, and let no one else have it." The jeweller went out and hastened to dispose of all he had; pearls, precious stones, every thing! Did he not grieve over his loss? Nay, he never gave a thought to it. At last he had collected the required sum. He hastened to the fisher; he paid the money with a beating heart, and the splendid pearl was his own.¹

You see the meaning of these parables? One man, like the laborer, learns what the kingdom of heaven is without having ever thought of it or looked for it; while another, like the merchant, has been searching for truth and goodness for whole years, perhaps a lifetime, not knowing what a glorious discovery awaits him. But when once a man, by whatsoever means, has seen the surpassing glory of that kingdom, he is ready to sacrifice every thing without another thought, if he may but enter in. He will not only sacrifice his gold or his possessions, all earthly love or the esteem of men, if they draw his heart away from that kingdom, but he will in every case sacrifice himself and his religious prejudices, every thing he has loved hitherto, but now finds to be neither good nor true. But, remember, he must find the treasure or the pearl himself. No one can find it for him.

We have spoken of the style of teaching adopted by Jesus and the reasons which influenced him in choosing it, and we may naturally go on to ask whether he can fairly be called a popular teacher. If we mean by a popular teacher one who enables his hearers to follow him without effort, and to comprehend him easily and perfectly at once, then we must

¹ Matthew xiii. 45, 46.

answer that Jesus was very far indeed from being one. What he had to say was drawn from the sacred depths of his own spiritual life, and the general mass of his hearers were utterly incapable of sounding the profundity and fully comprehending the scope of his words. Even his disciples and friends were generally unable to grasp his true meaning; and there can have been but few whose yearning for salvation and longing for the truth enabled them to understand the Master. The superficiality that springs from prejudice and self-conceit was, and still is, an insuperable and, alas! too common obstacle; and it is not given to many, even now, to see into the soul of Jesus. But the privilege of being understood by every one is confined by its very nature to those who stand upon something like the same level as their hearers. True popularity is something very different from superficiality, and in this other and higher sense it may be said that few teachers have ever been so popular as Jesus. In the first place he was perfectly simple. His language is never florid. It bears no trace of the usual Oriental inflation, or the elaborate trivialities of the rabbis; nor does he bury his teaching under a heap of traditional authorities, cited with a great display of learning. His calmness, his natural simplicity, his straightforward neglect of artificial adornments, and his transparent clearness command our admiration. Even when he threw his thoughts into the form of paradoxes, which he sometimes did involuntarily, but often on purpose, it was not because he wished to be enigmatical, but simply to assist the perception of his hearers by bringing a powerful stimulus to bear upon their thoughts and feelings, and stamping his conception upon their minds by the incisive form into which he threw it. We shall meet with many illustrations of this fact as we go on, and may now confine ourselves, by way of example, to the warning based upon experience against spiritual sloth and degeneration: “To him that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has.”¹

But to understand the secret of his popular power we must notice, above all, that his language moved exclusively in a sphere with which both he and his hearers were thoroughly familiar, or at least might and ought to have been so. This is true of the form of his teaching to begin with. It is considered one of the great merits of Homer, the prince of poets, that he never used an image or a comparison that was

¹ Matthew xiii. 12 (Mark iv. 25; Luke viii. 18).

not drawn from objects which both he and his hearers had seen. If English poets followed this rule they would have to banish lions, tigers, avalanches, crevasses, and a great deal beside from their compositions. Now Jesus always kept within the limits of his own experience. His inexhaustible wealth of illustration never leads him outside the circle of his own daily life. Hence the unequalled vividness of all his sayings. And in a certain sense the matter of his teaching is as familiar as its form. He never used an argument or a proof which any of his hearers could not follow. Fully to appreciate his discourses and his parables needed no learning or special knowledge that is not in the reach of every clear head and pure heart. It needed only that knowledge of the world and life, that knowledge of human nature, that self-knowledge for which every true man strives. Indeed, even this was hardly necessary. The one fatal obstacle to comprehending Jesus was a belief on the part of those that heard him that they knew every thing, and were all that they should be already. The one thing needful was a conscience laid open to his influence by dissatisfaction with itself, and a burning desire to become purer and better,—a conscience eager to learn the truth instead of being fenced against it by its own prejudices. Jesus never forced a truth upon any one by authority. Though he spoke with all the power of intense conviction, yet he constantly appealed to his hearers themselves, to their sense of truth, to their affections, to their conscience, and loved to convince them by a question or an appeal: “What think you?” “What man is there among you, who . . .” “Judge for yourselves!” “Hearken and understand!”¹ For he always went on the belief that he had not to implant any new principle or pour any new affections into human nature, but had simply to call from its depths what was sleeping there already and bring it into conscious life. It was in his own heart and life that he had found the truths he preached; and if he could but free the inner lives of others from all that oppressed and entangled them; if he could but bring their spiritual powers to full and true development,—they too would come to experience, to know, to feel, what he had known and felt himself. It may well be said of Jesus that he did not preach a new doctrine, but a new life. What he preached he had first lived and felt, and the natural consequence was that he found an ally in the conscience of every true-hearted man. If we bear all

¹ Matthew vii. 9, 16, xv. 10, xxi. 28; Luke vii. 40, 42, x. 36, *et seq.*

this in mind, and remember his love of parables and the richness of metaphor and illustration which characterized his teaching, we shall not be at a loss to answer the question whether Jesus was a popular teacher.

For the rest we can ascribe no dazzling gifts to him. He appears to have been entirely without those qualities which catch the eye and take the imagination by storm. On the whole, his appearance and his address seem to have been exceedingly simple. Externally, one would have said, he had little or nothing to help him. We still possess a story in our Gospels which may be regarded as an emblematic description of the way in which Jesus, as a popular teacher, satisfied the spiritual wants of countless hearers with but the slenderest possible means at his disposal.¹

Once, when Jesus had gone in a boat to a solitary place, the multitude heard where he was and followed him by land. The physician of souls was too pitiful to withdraw from them, and he cured their sick. But when the evening fell, his disciples said to him : "There are no houses here, and it is late already. Send them away to get food in the places round about!" But Jesus answered: "They need not go away. Give them something to eat." "But we have only five cakes of bread and two fishes to eat with them," they replied. "Bring them to me," said Jesus; and commanding the people to sit down on the grass, he took the bread and fish and, after pronouncing the customary blessing over them, broke them up as usual and gave the pieces to his disciples. They gave them to the people, who ate or passed them on until they were all satisfied ; and when they collected the broken fragments still left by the outside rows they filled twelve baskets ! There were about five thousand present.

Our Gospels still contain a few traces of the original meaning of the story, such as that "Jesus began to teach them many things," especially "concerning the kingdom of God;" but the Evangelists evidently accepted it in its literal sense, and were perhaps influenced in their treatment of it by the story of Elijah's miracle at Zarephath,² and still more that of the manna sent to feed the Israelites in the wilderness under the great hero of the old dispensation.³ In this literal sense, accordingly, they worked it out, by the addition of such details as that the people were told to sit down in groups or parties

¹ Matthew xiv. 13-21 (Mark vi. 30-44; Luke ix. 10-17; and John vi. 1-14)

² 1 Kings xvii. 8-16; compare 2 Kings iv. 42-44.

³ Exodus xvi.; Psalm lxxviii. 24: compare vol. i. pp. 289, 290.

of a hundred and of fifty, and by the calculation that the bread required would have cost two hundred pence (about £6 or £7), and that there were five thousand men, “besides women and children,” there. We need not stay to prove that this literal acceptance of the story lodges us in palpable absurdities, for every child knows that if we take away a part of any thing the remainder is less and not more than the whole was. Nor is it worth more than a passing mention that the first two Gospels repeat the story further on with slight modifications,¹ such as that the multitude numbered four thousand and remained three days with Jesus; that the disciples had seven cakes, and that seven baskets of fragments were left. The essential features of the story remain the same. Some commentators have seen in these twelve baskets the spiritual sustenance of the twelve tribes, and have understood the story to mean that, when the whole heathen world had been fed by Jesus, there was still enough left for the Jews. Such a story lends itself, by its very nature, to all kinds of modifications and ingenious speculations that perhaps have nothing to do with its true meaning. The Evangelists give us the clew to the real significance of the story when they bring the two “miracles of the loaves and fishes” (somewhat clumsily, it must be confessed) into connection with a warning uttered by Jesus against “the leaven” of the Pharisees;² and again, when they report a saying in which Jesus promises that all “who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be satisfied.”³ The meaning of the story seems to be that Jesus, with the slenderest means at his command, fed the souls of countless multitudes. Of this bread of the spirit it is literally true that it increases when it is consumed, and increases still more when imparted to others.

Here, then, we have a strikingly true and accurate picture of Jesus as the feeder of the great multitude, as the teacher of the people. We see him journeying through Galilee, and ask what means he had at his disposal for the accomplishment of his great purposes. He had no honored name or sounding title; no great patron to support him; no learning to command the respect, or traditional authority to enforce the assent, of his hearers; no brilliant powers or dazzling personal gifts,—and one would have said that he had nothing to recommend him above others, or to secure him any special influence. He was a man of the people, brought up as a workman, sim-

¹ Matthew xv. 32-38 (Mark viii. 1-9).

² Matthew xvi. 5-12 (Mark viii. 13-21).

³ Matthew v. 6.

ple in his language, and of ordinary dress and appearance. But see how the people press round him to catch every word he utters ! See how his simple language fascinates them ; how his familiar illustrations hold them by hundreds in strained attention ! And, when he ceases, mark the impression he has made,—the universal wonder, the exalted joy, the intense earnestness, the silent consolation, which have flowed from his preaching ! Surely this man of Nazareth, undistinguished as he seemed, was in the highest and fullest sense a teacher of the people.

Jesus attracted and fascinated his hearers not only by his style of teaching, but also by the subject of which he spoke. A few special remarks on this point may here be made.

Jesus once compared himself, as a religious teacher or “Scribe who had learned from the kingdom of heaven,” to a householder who kept all kinds of valuable things for which he had no immediate use in a storeroom. When he entertained his family and guests, friends and strangers, he brought out all manner of beautiful and useful things for them, some new and some old. It is a true description of the teaching of Jesus. The treasure-house of his spirit was inexhaustible. He knew the necessity of interweaving old expressions with which his hearers were familiar and new ones which would stimulate reflection, and so retaining their attention without wearying them. He regarded richness and diversity of form as essential to popular teaching. But this intermingling of “new” and “old” extended to the substance of his teaching also, and is illustrated by the preceding words : “Every Scribe who has become a disciple of the *kingdom of heaven*.” The “new” and the “old” alike referred to the kingdom of God ; and significantly enough the “new” is mentioned first, for not only did the Master’s wonderful originality give fresh meaning to even the oldest form of words, but he himself was fully aware that, though the religion he taught was almost as old as humanity itself, and the expectation of the kingdom of God as old as the spirit of prophecy, yet he was actually proclaiming principles and truths that were altogether new to his age and his people.

What these new truths and principles were we shall presently inquire, but must content ourselves on this occasion by citing one characteristic instance.

Jesus had taken up the task and the message of John, and had so far brought forth that which was old. But to him the

kingdom of God meant something very different from what John had understood by it, and in a certain sense his preaching of the kingdom was very new indeed. Now, since the parables, discourses, and sayings of Jesus deal almost exclusively with this kingdom, it is absolutely necessary for us to know what he meant by it. To say that the waking and sleeping hours of Jesus were filled by the ideal of the future, which had been the hope of Israel's men of God and the life-power of the nation for centuries,—to say that that ideal was the source of his zeal and the inspiration of his life is, after all, so entirely vague as to come to little or nothing; for we know that there had never been a fixed body of doctrines or ideas concerning the Messianic age, and that there was none in the time of Jesus. Moreover, Jesus showed great independence of conception in this matter. Though his mind had been fed by the writings of the prophets, yet he passed over the political aspects of the Messianic hope in absolute silence, and fixed attention exclusively upon its spiritual side. All the religious hopes which had thrilled the hearts of the noblest of his country's children,—the expectation of a more perfect and wide-spread knowledge of God, of a pure moral life, of untroubled love and harmony among men, of rest to the soul and peace between God and man,—all these he combined, in their ripest perfection and under their fairest forms, into one glorious conception, looking for its fulfilment in the immediate future at the founding of the kingdom of heaven. Under this expression, then, he understood a condition of the highest spiritual weal. But this was not all. He was too good an Israelite, too practical a man, and had too firm a grasp of the actual conditions of life, not to feel that all the institutions of social life, and the external lot of man, must be made to correspond to this spiritual condition. To him the Messianic kingdom meant society glorified by pure religion and perfect morality, enjoying as a consequence untroubled bliss, and blessed by God in ample measure with all material good.

John had laid almost exclusive stress upon the last judgment and the destruction of the godless, which were to precede the founding of the kingdom. His preaching, therefore, was the sound of an alarm and a cry to penitence. Jesus, during far the greater part of his ministry, threw this terrible judgment entirely into the background; and even during the last few weeks of his life, when it assumes a prominent place in his preaching, still the announcement of the golden age is always prevailingly joyous and consoling on his lips,—a true

gospel, or “glad tidings.” In his teaching there is not a trace of any vengeful feeling towards the stranger, not a hint of the doom of destruction awaiting the heathen oppressors of his country ; and it is comparatively seldom that we meet with those anticipations of sudden and violent revolutions which John and his other contemporaries so constantly expressed. Jesus expected that the kingdom of God, in accordance with its spiritual nature, would establish itself in secret, and would subdue and renovate all things before it displayed itself in its glory. He illustrated this secret influence and progress of the kingdom of God by an image taken from one of the occupations of daily life. When a woman is going to bake she takes three measures of flour and begins to knead ; but first she throws in a piece of leaven (equivalent to yeast), and as she kneads the mass of dough the leaven is spread about and mixed up with it until every particle is leavened and ready to rise. Thus must the spiritual principle of the kingdom of God penetrate society. And however small and insignificant the beginnings of the great work of regeneration might appear, there was no need to despair ; for it would be with it as with a grain of mustard seed which a man takes and sows in the ground. It is the smallest of all garden seeds, but when it grows up it is the greatest of herbs ; nay, it becomes a tree under the branches of which the birds of heaven come for shelter.¹

In such images as these Jesus expressed his faith in the power of good, in the influence of truth ; in a word, his faith in God. But we must not forget that he had great faith in human nature too. He compared his own work to that of a husbandman who sows his field with seed, and then does nothing more to it, and never sees the grains as they silently burst and sprout below the ground. But as he is going on his way the seed shoots up, and grows he knows not how ; for the earth brings forth fruit of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear ; and then the reapers are sent in with their sickles, for the harvest time has come.² So Jesus could afford to wait. He did not expect to see the fruits of his labor immediately. He was content for them to ripen gradually and slowly, and he never for a moment doubted the fruitfulness of the soil, never doubted the natural, inborn goodness of the human heart.

Not that he allowed himself to be deceived by mere appear-

¹ Matthew xiii. 31-33 (Mark iv. 30-32; Luke xiii. 18-21).

² Mark iv. 26-29.

ances ! Not that he believed, when hundreds of hearers were pressing round him, that they were all inspired by a true, a deep, a holy interest in the message he delivered, or that all would receive a lasting impression from it. His own words will teach us how far he was from any such delusion.¹ A husbandman went out to sow his field, and, as he flung the seed before him in a semicircle, some fell upon the pathway that ran across the land, and lying exposed upon its beaten surface, unbroken by the plough, was snapped up by a swarm of birds that alighted behind him. Other seed fell upon a place where a rock lay hidden just below the surface of the soil. Here the corn shot up luxuriantly, for there was no room for it to strike deep root, and all its strength went into the blade, and the warm rock fostered its growth from below as the sun did from above. But when the heat of summer came, the feeble ears were soon parched up. They could draw no moisture from the earth, and so the hot sun killed them. Yet other seed fell on a spot where brambles had been growing, and though the plough had cut them down their roots were still in the ground ; and when the seed began to grow the brambles came up also, and were too strong for the corn, and at last choked it. But some of the seed fell upon good ground and full ears sprang from it, and each grain brought forth fruit a hundred or sixty or thirty fold.

Jesus himself laid special stress upon this parable, for he closed it with the solemn words : " He who has ears to hear, let him hear ! " Indeed, he is said to have explained it immediately afterwards at the request of his disciples.² It gives us a vivid picture of the difficulties against which the husbandman had to contend in Palestine ; but it is far more noteworthy as a testimony to the deep and varied knowledge of human nature possessed by Jesus. He divides his hearers into four classes. Some are simply incapable of understanding him, for they are without any sense for the higher truths of the spirit ; for them his teaching can do nothing, — it goes in at the one ear and out at the other. Then there are superficial hearers, who understand something of his teaching and are highly delighted with what they hear, but have no depth of nature ; as soon as they meet with opposition or persecution their enthusiasm dies and they fall away. There are others who understand and feel the truth, but are weak of will ; they lack decision and perseverance, and so the cares and

¹ Matthew xiii. 3-9 (Mark iv. 3-9; Luke viii. 5-8).

² Matthew xiii. 18-23 (Mark iv. 14-20; Luke viii. 11-15).

temptations of life prevent their putting what they have heard into practice and choke their good resolutions. Lastly, there are those who understand the word, in whose heart it finds an echo, who carry it out and put it into practice in a spirit of power, and bring forth fruits,—the one more and the other less, according to their moral and spiritual capacity, but all abundantly.

So Jesus knew with whom he had to deal; but he also knew that though the profound and the superficial nature, the earnest and the careless, could not be separated now, they would not always be left together. At present all must be received who came to listen to the preaching of the kingdom, but they would be sifted finally. “It is with the kingdom of God,” he said,¹ “as with a net that is dragged through the water, and brings in all kinds of fish. When it is full, the fisherinen draw it to shore, and sit down and pick out the good fish to collect in their baskets, but throw away the worthless.”

With hallowed zeal he warned the multitudes not to be content with merely listening to what he said, but to do it. There were once two houses² built not far apart upon the bank of a stream that ran through a pleasant valley; and one appeared to the eye to be just as firmly and strongly built as the other. But winter came, and the rain fell like a water-spout, and the swollen stream rose above its banks and rolled onwards,—a fierce mountain torrent breaking a way for its waters. The storm arose with terrific violence, and wind and wave dashed upon the two houses as though the elements had joined their strength to hurl them to the ground. In the one house, when thus assailed by flood and storm, a single stone might be loosened here or there, but the whole stood firm, for its owner had built its foundations on a rock, and it could defy the fury of the storm. This builder is the type of the wise man who listens to the words of Jesus, and then does what he commands. But where is the other house? A mighty crash is heard for a moment above the howling of the wind and the rush of the maddened waters. This house could not defy their onslaught. Its walls tottered, its timbers cracked, it fell in with a crash, and the wild waters carried down the treasures of the house and rolled the very stones away! For the owner had built upon the yellow sand of the desert, that in dry weather seems almost as hard and firm as the very rock itself; but the waters of the stream had washed it loose, the foundations gave way, and the house

¹ Matthew xiii. 47, 48.

² Matthew vii. 24-27 (Luke vi. 47-49).

fell in upon the heads of those that dwelt in it. . . “Such builders are the foolish ones who listen to my words, but do them not!”

Enough has now been said of the Master’s mode of teaching. We shall not return expressly to the subject, but in the following chapters we shall meet with constant evidence of his keen observation that hardly any thing escaped, and his wonderfully happy power of producing the right illustration at the right moment. In a word, we shall see how Jesus makes the whole field of Nature and of man serve to bring the truth before the very eyes of those whom he addresses. We may conclude in the words of the same poet, whose lines we placed at the head of this chapter, and so pay our tribute of admiration and wonder to the teaching which Jesus gave his people : —

To thee all Nature’s oracles unfold
The wondrous meaning deep concealed of old,
Now by thy touch of sympathy laid bare!
To thee the richness of their truth they yield, —
Each sparrow and each lily of the field
Preaching the gospel of a Father’s care!

The shepherd seeking his lost lambs again,
The housewife’s bread, the gently-falling rain,
The morning sun that climbs the heavenly height,
The green grass, and the sports of careless youth, —
All are but garments of the living truth
That through them shines and fills our lives with light



CHAPTER XI.

T H E B E A T I T U D E S .

MATTHEW V. 3-12.¹

“ **B**LESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

“ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!

“ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

“ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy

¹ Luke vi. 20-26.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely [for my sake]. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Such are the well-known Beatitudes which stand at the head of the so-called Sermon on the Mount.¹ They contain the great central thoughts of Jesus' preaching, — his gospel in fact. Should any one ask who Jesus was, and what were his purposes, we could give him no more concise and no fuller answer than these eight or nine short sentences. This was what Jesus had to offer, what he brought into the world, — not a new code with its penal enactments, not a new system of doctrine with its curse upon all who should dare to depart from it; but a sure promise of deliverance from misery, of consolation under all suffering, and perfect satisfaction of all the wants of the soul. In these beatitudes he gives us his best thoughts, shows us the purpose of his life, and, as it were, lays bare his soul before us. It is with true spiritual insight that Matthew places them at the head of all the discourses, though they cannot really have come first in point of time. The concluding passage shows that in their present form, at any rate, they cannot date from the early days of the Master's ministry; for the direct form of address, "Blessed are ye," and the words that immediately follow the beatitudes,² clearly show that they were addressed to the friends of Jesus; and in the early days of his mission they cannot have been subject to the reproach, the calumny, and the persecution which are here implied as their lot. As for the expression "for my sake," it is probably added to the real words of Jesus, both here and elsewhere, by the tradition. And yet it was well to put the beatitudes first, for they are the greeting which Jesus offers to the world; they are the scheme of his life-work, the pure reflection of what was in his heart, the express image of his life and character. As the gentle sound of that reiterated "blessed" falls upon our ear, we feel in the first place that he who utters it himself rejoices in the blessings, or has them within his grasp; and then that

¹ See p. 141.

² Matthew v. 13-16. See, also, pp. 163, 164.

a conviction reigns in his heart, clear and strong, that he has power to pour them upon others too. Surely, if these few sayings stood alone, they would be enough to assure to Jesus a place of honor among the benefactors of mankind.

What a treasure of pure feeling, of hallowed sympathy, of true love for man, is contained in these few lines! At the same time they breathe a kind of gentle humor that has generally escaped observation. "Blessed are they that have," say the proverbs of every age; "Better be envied than pitied;" "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Such expressions reflect unmistakably the ignoble, commonplace, so-called practical wisdom of the superficial multitudes of every time and place. In startling contrast to all this, Jesus puts forth his new and purely moral estimate: "Blessed are — the poor, the meek, the mourners!"

Perhaps the keenness of the paradox would come out still more clearly if we might accept as original the form of the sayings which Luke has preserved. In his Gospel we have only the first four beatitudes, and even these are given in a still shorter form; but he balances them by four "Woes!" which do not appear in Matthew at all. The whole passage runs as follows: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men shall hate you and when they shall cut you off from them, and revile you and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you rich men, for your consolation is past and gone. Woe unto you that are satisfied, for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets." But this is evidently a later form, and, as we have it, far from original. This is clearly shown by the reference to the Jewish ban, or "cutting off;" the expression "for the Son of Man's sake;" and, above all, the use of such a phrase as "*their* fathers," as though Jesus stood outside his people and renounced all connection with them. He could never really have used such an expression.

But how can we explain the alterations which the beatitudes have undergone in the third Gospel? The answer to this question deserves especial attention, for it directs us to a

remarkable characteristic of the Gospel. One of the sources¹ from which Luke drew his materials was a so-called Ebionite document.² Ebionites ("poor") was the name given to a party of Jewish-Christians, remarkable for their hatred of the rich and their exaltation of poverty. We shall meet with several traces in the third Gospel of the use of this Ebionite authority. Now there can be no doubt that the words and deeds of Jesus were often such as might fairly be urged in support of these Ebionite views. He had more sympathy with the lot of the poor, and paid them more attention than others;³ and he saw rich men from time to time encumbered by their wealth and position when they might otherwise have joined him.⁴ But for all that Jesus was not an Ebionite. There is a wide difference between longing to befriend the poor and systematically exalting poverty, between uttering a solemn warning to the rich and cursing wealth. But as the sayings of Jesus were handed down by oral tradition in the Jewish-Christian circles referred to, their form was now and then involuntarily modified, and in the course of time they were committed to writing in this modified form; and Luke, as already said, drew his four blessings and his four woes from some such Ebionite source, perhaps the Gospel of the Hebrews.⁵

All this may be quite true, however, and yet the simpler forms of the first and fourth beatitudes, preserved by Luke, may be the most authentic. In that case the additional words in Matthew—poor *in spirit*, hunger and thirst after righteousness—are put in by way of explanation. If this be so, the explanation they offer is certainly the true one; for Jesus never meant to pronounce a blessing on the heads of all the poor in the ordinary sense, but only over those who felt their poverty, who were conscious of their deep need of help, and longed for spiritual wealth. Nor did he mean to say that literal hunger was a blessed state, but that all who were urged on by the unquenchable and irresistible longing for uncorrupted piety and goodness would be surely blessed.

Let us look at the beatitudes once more. The first four are more or less distinguished from the rest by their reference to passive rather than active virtues, and the last two lines form the transition to what follows. Those who are marked by the graces and virtues spoken of are said to be blessed now in virtue of what will fall to their lot in the immediate

¹ Luke i. 1-4. See p. 29. ² See pp. 22, 57. ³ Compare Matthew xi. 5.
⁴ Compare Matthew xix. 23, 24. ⁵ See pp. 22, 116.

future, — membership of the kingdom of God, divine consolation, boundless influence, and the satisfaction of the passionate longing of their souls for moral perfection. But we are not to suppose that this future was to begin after their death, and these blessings of salvation to be bestowed on them in heaven. Heaven is not referred to here at all. The kingdom of God is upon earth and nowhere else ; and it is to the kingdom of God, to the perfect and blessed society of the future, that the promises refer. And so, in the last four beatitudes, the compassion which the merciful will in their turn receive refers to the grace of God, who will take pity on them when the Messianic kingdom is founded ; the privilege of seeing Him refers to the clear and personal knowledge of God which the pure in heart will have in that age. When those who imitate God, the great peacemaker, are called his sons or followers,¹ the title refers to their moral glory as members of the kingdom of heaven ; and membership of that kingdom will be the sure reward of those who are persecuted for the good cause. Meanwhile we must bear in mind that Jesus is not describing or referring to eight different types of character ; it is one type worked out in eight different directions ; it is the description of the followers of Jesus such as he would have them, such as he longed for them to be, though few of them actually united in themselves all these characteristics.

Though the beatitudes make a single whole, the several virtues they enforce appear separately in the teaching of Jesus elsewhere. Thus he lays constant stress upon humility, childlike simplicity and openness, and readiness to forgive ; and he is never weary of warning his hearers against pride, hard-heartedness, and avarice. He did not attach the smallest value to the piety that was made up of words : “ Not every one who says [to me] Lord ! Lord ! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the will of my heavenly Father ; ”² and he warned his hearers against the danger of wilful moral blindness, darkening the soul’s eye of reason and conscience. “ The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye be healthy your whole body will be light ; but if your eye be diseased your whole body will be darkened. Watch, then, lest the light that is in you be darkness.”³ Following out John’s image, “ Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is

¹ Matthew v. 45; Ephesians v. 1. ² Matthew vii. 21; compare Luke vi. 46.
³ Matthew vi. 22, 23 (Luke xi. 34–36).

cut down and cast into the fire,”¹ he said: “ We know a tree by its fruits. A sound tree cannot bear rotten fruit, nor a rotten tree sound fruit. Nor do we gather figs from thorn-trees, or grapes from bramble bushes. So, too, the good man brings from the good treasure of his heart the things that are good, and the bad man brings from the bad treasure of his heart the things that are bad; for out of the fulness of his heart his mouth speaks.”² So far was he from intending the beatitudes to excuse his followers from moral effort, that he cried to them with solemn emphasis, “ Go in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they that go in by it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it.”³ He knew what constant effort it required, what watchfulness, what self-denial to enter the kingdom of God.

Let us now take some of the warnings that correspond to these exhortations and blessings. In contrast with the poor who hunger for the highest good stands the picture of the rich fool: “ Beware of greed, for abundant possessions cannot make you sure of life! ”⁴ There was once a rich man, upon whose goodly lands such a heavy harvest stood that he was at a loss what to do with all his corn. So he suddenly resolved, ‘ I will pull down my barns and build far greater ones instead. There I will lay up the produce and the goods of this and former years, and then fling away all care and trouble and anxiety and enjoy my life at ease. I have abundant means for years to come, and I will make the most of them.’ But God said unto him, ‘ O fool! this very night your life shall be required of you, and where will all that you have gathered up be then?’ So it is with those who heap up provisions for themselves, but are not rich in God.”⁵

Jesus not only says that the gentle and pitiful are blessed, but warns us earnestly against setting ourselves on a lofty pedestal and passing sentence on our neighbor: “ Judge not others lest you yourselves be judged! For the sentence you pass shall be passed on you, and with the measure you use for others you yourselves shall be measured.”⁶ He laid all the more stress on this because those who set themselves up

¹ Matthew vii. 19; compare iii. 10 (Luke iii. 9).

² Luke vi. 43-45; compare Matthew vii. 16-20, xii. 33-35.

³ Matthew vii. 13, 14; compare Luke xiii. 24.

⁴ After an amended version.

⁵ Luke xii. 15-21.

⁶ Matthew vii. 1, 2; compare Luke vi. 37, 38.

as the censors of their neighbor's little faults are often blind to their own much greater sins : " Can you see the splinter in your brother's eye, when you see not the beam that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ' Let me get that splinter out of your eye,' when behold! there is a beam in your own eye? O blind one! remove the beam from your own eye, and then you will see clearly enough to lay hold of the splinter in your brother's eye, and draw it out." ¹

He constantly warns us to forgive those that have injured us, and to reconcile ourselves with those we have injured, as a duty we owe in consideration of what we hope to receive or have already received from God. " If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not others, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses." ² Once when Simon Peter asked him, " How many times must I forgive my brother when he wrongs me? Seven times?" (the rabbis thought three times enough) he answered, " I say not seven times, but seven and seventy." ³ Then he added this parable : —

" There was once a king who determined, after long delay, to reckon with his ministers and ascertain how much was due from each of them to the royal coffers. So all the high officers of state, the governors of the several districts, the contractors for the tolls and other branches of the revenue were summoned to the court. Among those who were loath to obey the summons was one of the most distinguished, the governor of the richest province. He had long neglected the duties of his post, and had wasted the money he ought to have paid over to his monarch in unexampled dissipation. So the sum had risen at last to almost four million pounds. But now the day of reckoning had come, and, since he could not pay, the prince in Oriental fashion ordered him and his wife and children to be sold as slaves, and all that he possessed to be put to sale, that as much of the debt as possible might be wiped out. The governor fell upon his face at the feet of the king in despair, and cried in supplication, ' Lord! have patience with me and I will pay it all!' It was a foolish promise that he never could fulfil; but what will not a man say in such dire necessity? His master saw his misery and had

¹ Matthew vii. 3-5 (Luke vi. 41, 42).

² Matthew vi. 14, 15; compare Mark xi. 25, 26. See also Matthew v. 23-26.

³ Matthew xviii. 21, 22, after an amended version; compare Luke xvii. 3, 4
See Genesis iv. 24, and vol. i. p. 54.

compassion on him. With princely generosity he not only let him go, but even forgave him all the debt. Beside himself with the unspeakable joy of relief, the governor left the palace which he had entered in despair and terror. But who is that coming to meet him, or rather endeavoring in evident confusion to avoid him? It is one of his inferiors, who owes him a trifle of three or four pounds, and is not prepared to pay him at the moment. What could have been more natural than for the great man, in his thankful joy, to make the same day glad for his own humble debtor? But no! He rushed up to him, seized him by the throat, and cried, ‘Pay what you owe me!’ The other fell upon his knees and besought his mercy. ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay it all!’ But the tyrant was not melted by the thought that he himself had uttered these same words but now; and in the mouth of his inferior they did not convey a promise it was impossible to fulfil, as they had done in his. Was it vexation at the danger he had just escaped, or was this cruelty a first step towards putting his affairs upon a sounder footing? However this may be, he threw his debtor into prison till those few shillings should be paid! But his conduct soon began to be talked about. The other great officers of state heard of it, and could not help reporting it indignantly to the king. The heartless conduct of the man to whom he had extended such princely favor raised the monarch’s utmost indignation, and he summoned the delinquent into his presence once again. ‘Wretch!’ he cried, ‘I forgave you that enormous debt, because you entreated me to defer exacting it, not daring even to ask that it should be forgiven! And should not you have had pity on your debtor as I had pity on you? Throw him into prison until he has satisfied my uttermost claims!’ It was a hopeless sentence, for the debt could never be paid.

“And so,” said Jesus, “shall my heavenly Father do to you unless each one from his heart forgives his brother.”¹

Jesus took many opportunities of impressing upon his hearers that simplicity and humility were absolutely necessary for those who would enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples were disputing which of them was to be the greatest, he rebuked them by saying, “Whosoever is least among you and humbles himself to be the servant of all, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”² Another time he warned

¹ Matthew xviii. 23-35.

² Matthew xviii. 4, xx. 26, 27 (Mark ix. 35, x. 43, 44).

them not to imitate the Scribes in their greediness for honor. "Never let yourselves be called Rabbi or Master, for one is your leader and you are all brothers. He who is chief among you shall be your servant. He who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."¹ Or he took a child and placed it in the midst of them, and said, "I tell you truly, unless you turn and become as children, simple, natural, and receptive of all good influences, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven."²

Well might it be said of the contemporaries of Jesus, and of all for whom his Gospel has shone and shines, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see! For verily I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them."³

CHAPTER XII.

THE VOCATION OF THE CITIZENS OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

MATTHEW V. 13-16, XXV. 14-46, VI. 19-21, 24-34.

TO learn something more of the teaching of Jesus, let us turn to the Sermon on the Mount again, and take it up where we broke off just now.

In the last beatitude Jesus had turned directly to his friends and followers to cheer and encourage them under the bitter opposition to which they would be exposed. This leads, by the most natural transition, to the description of their work and their place in society which follows. "You are the salt of the earth." As salt is needed to give food a relish and to preserve it from corruption, so they were needed to give social life a flavor, and preserve it from moral ruin. Without them it was in danger of becoming hopelessly frivolous and insipid. "But if the salt loses its flavor," — as it might do if long exposed to the sun or blasted by lightning, — "nothing can restore its virtues to it. However precious it once was, it is now worthless, not fit even to be cast upon the dunghill! It is thrown away and trodden under foot." And so if any one

¹ Matthew xxiii. 8-12.

² Matthew xviii. 2, 3.

³ Matthew xiii. 16, 17 (Luke x. 23, 24).

should fall away from the good cause to which he had dedicated his life, what good could come of him for any thing?¹ — “ You are the light of the world.” It is your task to teach the truth, to teach the way of life, to others, and it is a task you cannot lay down. “ A city built upon a hill cannot be hidden. And no one who lights the lamp at eventime sets it on the ground and covers it with the corn measure ; but they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify” — not you, but — “ your Father who is in heaven.”² To see the force of the last illustration, we must bear in mind that the arrangements of a Jewish house differed widely from those of our own. The measure was an indispensable article of daily use ; but moderately high tables such as ours were not used, and the lamp, which had no foot-piece and stood very low, had to be set on a tall candlestick or lampstand. It is curious to notice, in passing, that the first Gospel makes the lamp, which represents the friends of Jesus, shed its light over “ those that are in the house ;” that is to say, the Jews ; whereas the Heathen-Christian Evangelist,³ Luke, declares that “ they who come in,” that is, the Heathen, “ shall see the light.”

These words are another and a very clear indication that the Sermon on the Mount transports us to a later period of the ministry of Jesus,—a period at which the profound significance that his character and person had acquired reflected high rank and conferred wide influence upon the simple fishermen and artisans who had attached themselves to him. But the higher they were placed, the heavier was their responsibility ; and should they ever prove untrue to themselves and him, the deeper their fall !

Of course we must not limit this idea to the personal friends of Jesus, but must apply it to every Christian without exception. All of us who take a serious view of life, whatever our position or our sphere of action may be, have some work for God to do in the world, and we must make it the object of our lives to do it. This thought was always present to the mind of Jesus, and experience taught him that ‘ he who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is great ; and he who is unjust in that which is least is unjust also in that which is great.’⁴ He drew out this conception

¹ Matthew v. 13 (Mark ix. 50; Luke xiv. 34, 35).

² Matthew v. 14–16 (Mark iv. 21).

³ Luke viii. 16, xi. 33. See p. 31.

⁴ Luke xvi. 10.

of the task of life more especially in the parable of the talents.¹ Before giving the story we may note that the word *talent* does not mean a special gift or capacity, but a certain sum of money amounting to nearly four hundred pounds; and also that in the East it was a much more difficult matter in olden times to invest a sum of money than it is now with us; "stocks," "exchanges," and so forth, were unknown. The parable runs as follows:—

A rich man had to go abroad, and, since his absence would be a long one, he determined to arrange all his affairs, especially the management of his money matters, before he started. So he called his servants (we might say his slaves, if the word were not closely associated in our minds with the unhappy condition of the negro slaves), and, fully relying on their honesty, entrusted them with the care of his treasures. To one, for instance, he gave five talents to manage, to another two, to a third one, to each according to his ability; and, having arranged all his affairs in like manner, set out at once on his journey. The servant in whose hands the largest sum of money had been placed did all that in him lay to prove himself worthy of his master's confidence. He bought and sold, invested in this and that, and was finally rewarded by seeing the five talents gradually increase to ten. The second servant also went to work with conscientious diligence, and had the same reward of doubling the sum entrusted to him while his master was away. But the man who had received one talent did not care to exert himself. He only considered how he could keep the money safe; and, since strong boxes were neither so common nor so secure in those days as they are now, he dug a hole in the ground by night, in a place he could not fail to find again, and there he hid the bars of silver. All he would have to do would be to come now and again and see whether the earth had been disturbed. At last, when years had come and gone, the master returned to his home. A great feast was prepared to welcome him, and meanwhile he called his servants together to hear what they had been doing with his money. The first came with his accounts and vouchers under his arm, and showed his master how he had doubled his five talents. The second brought a similar account, and each received the highest praise and approbation. "Well done! good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a little, I will set you in command over much. And now come in and be my guest at the feast of my

¹ Matthew xxv. 14-30.

rejoicing!" Then came the third, carrying the talent entrusted to him in his hands. "Master," he said, covering his confusion by a show of assurance, and accusing his master by way of defending himself, "I know what an unjust and cruel man you are, making us toil and pant and then taking all the gain yourself; so I dared not risk any thing, but kept the money safely. Here you have your own." "Wicked and slothful servant!" was the reply, "did you think I should be unreasonable in my demands? Then you might at least have lodged the money with the changers that I might receive it back with interest. Take the talent from him," added he, turning to his attendants, "and give it to him that has the ten; for whosoever has shall receive yet more, but from him who has not shall be taken away even the little he has. And cast the worthless servant out into the darkness; there let him wail and gnash his teeth, shut out from the joyous feast within."

The meaning is not hard to see. The talents are the opportunities that God gives us of working for his kingdom. One has more than another, for each one's sphere of work and influence differs in extent from that of others. But there is not one who can do no good, who can be of no use, who can make no one happy. Whoever loves God will make the most of his opportunities, will put them out to interest. Be his powers great or small he will do something with his life. It will not pass away without result, but will in some way glorify God and bless the world. But he who loves not God is slothful and unwilling, looks about for excuses and gets nothing done. The one is ever widening the scale of his usefulness; the other gradually loses all his power of doing or of being any thing.

This story is followed in the Gospel by a description that has no immediate connection with it of the last judgment, before the founding of the Messianic kingdom. In its present form it certainly is not due to Jesus, and cannot have arisen till the men of his generation had quite died out. We mention it here, however, partly because it very possibly sprang out of a figure of speech that Jesus actually used, but chiefly because its leading thought is certainly his, and places in the clearest light what he demands of all his followers and what he promises them. This leading thought is that the happiness of man hereafter depends solely and entirely upon whether he has given proof of love,—of simple, free, and generous love of man. Let us listen to it:—

The last day has come. The Judge, surrounded by his angels, appears in all his glory, and the martyrs who have suffered for the kingdom of God, who have endured hunger and cold, persecution and misery, in preaching the Gospel, surround the throne, for they are subject to no judgment.¹ All the nations are gathered there before the seat of judgment, and are waiting in awful suspense the sentence that will fix their weal or woe. The Judge parts them from one another as a shepherd parts the sheep from the goats, setting the one on his right and the other on his left hand. Then he turns to those on his right hand and says, "Come, ye blessed of God! enter now upon the joy and glory prepared for you from eternity. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came unto me." The virtuous when thus addressed are filled with amazement, for they know not when they have had the opportunity of giving such support or showing such friendship to the glorious King. "Lord," they reply, "when did we ever see thee in such plight that our lowly aid could serve thee? When have we ever done to thee as thou hast said?" The King points to the martyrs and confessors round him, and replies, "Verily I say to you, that inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you have done it to me."² Then he turns to those on his left hand: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the fiery lake prepared for the devil and those that serve him! For I was hungry, and you gave me no meat; thirsty, and you gave me no drink; a stranger, and you took me not in; naked, and you clothed me not; sick and in prison, and you visited me not." In terror and amazement at his words they begin to excuse themselves: "Lord! when saw we thee in such plight that we might lend thee aid? and when did we refuse it?" The stern answer of the Judge confirms the sentence: "Verily I say to you, inasmuch as you withheld it from one of the least of these, you withheld it from me." This it is that decides our blessedness or misery on the great day!³

We shall have another opportunity of showing that this conception of a great judgment, held by the Christ in person, took a prominent place among the expectations of the apostolic age. Our immediate purpose was simply to show, in

¹ Compare Matthew v. 10-12.

² Matthew xxv. 31-46.

³ Compare Mark ix. 41.

connection with the lofty promises of the Sermon on the Mount, what was the task of life which Jesus set before his friends and all who should attach themselves to him. It was no confession of faith, but a life inspired by active love of God and man which he required from every one.

In marking out the path his followers were to tread, Jesus could not be content with simply indicating their field of labor. He must, of course, speak of other things as well. For human life is many-sided. As corporeal beings we feel corporeal needs ; as members of society we have social cares, wants, and wishes. Jesus accordingly gave his disciples special exhortations on the attitude they were to take with respect to worldly goods. We still possess a short address from the earliest period of his ministry on the question of what should be the greatest care of man. The near approach of the kingdom of God made it a matter of extreme importance to throw light on the duty of its future citizens in this respect also. The words will be found in the Sermon on the Mount. Let us listen to them :—

“ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.” (We must bear in mind that the word *treasures* does not mean the same as wealth. Great possessions in cattle or land for instance, or in money put out to interest, would not be included in the word ; for it means only that which is stored away and not used for the present, whether gold and silver, or splendid robes and tapestries, or other such valuables, or corn.) “ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, and where no thieves break through or steal.” By these treasures Jesus means good deeds and all that merits an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. When the kingdom is founded, its citizens will receive here upon earth those treasures which God preserves for them meanwhile in heaven. And the words that follow show us why this choice is of such supreme importance : “ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”¹

Luke, or rather his Ebionite authority, makes all this refer simply to the merits of voluntary poverty : “ Sell all your goods, and give the produce in alms. Make yourselves purses that grow not old, and a treasure that never fails, in heaven.” But what Jesus really meant was, that a man can-

¹ Matthew vi. 19-21; Luke xii. 33, 34.

not pursue divided aims. "No one can serve two masters." The absolute allegiance due from the slave to his master cannot possibly be divided. "Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will cleave to the one and despise the other; you cannot serve both God and Mammon" (that is *wealth*). To one of the two, and one only, can the heart cling and the life be dedicated. You can set before you as the object of your life either the support of all that is good and pure and noble, or the gaining of worldly goods; but the attempt to combine the two is vain.¹

So the follower of Jesus must wean his heart from all worldly things. "Take no anxious thought for your life, what you shall eat and what you shall drink; nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment?" Then will not God, who has given you the greater gift, provide the lesser also? "Consider the birds of heaven. They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you worth much more than they? Which of you by anxious thought can add a span to his lifetime? And why take thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothe the grass which grows in the field to-day and is cast into the fire to-morrow, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Then take no anxious thought, saying: What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these do the heathen seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these earthly things shall be given with it. Be not anxious for the morrow, then; the morrow will bring its own cares with it. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof."²

In the same tone and with similar illustrations from Nature, he warned his disciples on another occasion not to shrink from mortal danger in preaching the kingdom of God. "Be not afraid of men who destroy the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear the might of Him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a halfpenny? and yet not one of them falls dead to earth without your Father's will. Nay! the very hairs of your

¹ Matthew vi. 24 (Luke xvi. 13).

² Matthew vi. 25-34 (Luke xii. 22-31).

head are all numbered. Fear not, then! you are worth more than many sparrows."¹

Let us pause a moment, and think over what we have heard. Will this kind of reasoning hold good? Can we really banish human cares by thinking of flowers and birds? Do we think it a lofty virtue to be so careless of material wants, so indifferent as to worldly goods? Far from it. Indeed, such confidence is often put to shame. Though Nature is so ordained upon the whole that man and beast are saved from perishing of want, yet there are exceptions to the rule; and instances, alas! are not so rare, especially in our Northern climates, of human creatures dying of hunger or cold, or both. Besides, this view of life is altogether one-sided. It takes no account of the great and certain facts that work, at once a duty and a blessing, is *holy* in the highest sense; that forethought, not to be confused with vain anxiety, is not a sin, but the dictate of a healthy conscience; that the faithful performance of the daily duties of our occupation is a great part of religion; that we are not only permitted but positively bound to do our best to make our way in the world by honest work, and so contribute to the material well-being of society. A piety that shrank from the world was far too common among the Christians of the first century, and reached its culmination in the monastic life of later times; and though it is not actually recommended in these words of Jesus, there is a great deal in them that might nourish it.

But in spite of all this there is a deep truth hidden in the words, a truth which we can feel even when we cannot define it. They fascinate us by their freshness, by the bright and joyous spirit they breathe, by the glow of conviction that surrounds them. It is true, in the first place, that God requires us to dedicate to him, not certain hours, certain forms, or certain specified actions, but our whole and undivided heart and life; in other words, that all our affections and all our powers must be consecrated to the spread of what is good; that God should be not only the last and highest, but the only goal of our thoughts and efforts, our work, our care, our wealth,—all that we have and are. In the next place, what gave Jesus such perfect trust in God was his absolute belief in His almighty providence, coupled with his deep and holy confidence that every thing material is subordinate to the moral life, and must be made subservient to its development. He never for a moment doubted theoretically in God's abso-

¹ Matthew x. 28-31 (Luke xii. 4-7).

lute supremacy over all Nature and all the events of life, but we may well believe that the special strength and intensity of his trust in God was the result of his own experience. He, more than any other, had experienced the fact that his heavenly Father never let him want the needful nourishment and strengthening of spirit; never failed to protect his soul in time of need, nor to uphold him in the fiercest temptation, so that opposition and suffering could not prevail against him, but were turned at last to blessings. And had not the supply of his material wants been thrown, as it were, into the bargain? He had set aside all thought of them for the kingdom of God's sake, yet never had he lacked his daily food, and many a danger had been warded from his head. His own experience, then, compelled him to speak as we have heard.

Again, to do full justice to this lesson, we must transport ourselves to the time, and place ourselves amid the surroundings, of Jesus. We will lay no special stress upon the fact that in the East Nature is far more bountiful, and human wants proportionately easier to satisfy, than with us. It is much more to the purpose that the duty of increasing the material prosperity of the world could hardly be dreamed of at such a time as that of Jesus and the Apostles. Outside the circle of Jewish devotees, society was godless to the very core, and the world was licentious beyond all parallel. Moreover, Jesus and all the pious Jews believed most firmly that the founding of the kingdom of God would soon put an end to the whole existing order of society, the corruption of which did much to strengthen the belief. But the most important point of all that we must notice is, that a new religious movement, such as that which Jesus caused, must of necessity give rise to special efforts and special regulations; must compel those who take part in it to break off connections, to relinquish enjoyments, and to defy difficulties which will assuredly reassert their claims in the ordinary course of life. When first the faith in man's higher destiny burst forth in all its clearness and power, was it not inevitable that men should neglect all lower, all material things in the joy of that discovery? And finally, we must observe that these words are uttered not by way of consolation, but of rebuke. Jesus gives all doubting, hesitating souls the result of his experience and thought, and urges them to imitate his deed of faith, to set the visible below the invisible, as he had done.¹ Surely he, too, must have asked himself when on the point of laying down his occupa-

¹ Compare 2 Corinthians iv. 18; Hebrews xi. 1 ff.

tion, “What shall I eat? what shall I drink? wherewith shall I be clothed?” But he had silenced all such doubts by listening to the voice of God within, and going whither he was called, without reserve. All worldly obstacles and earthly cares must be set aside. “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” he had said distinctly to himself, “and all these temporal things will be provided.” And afterwards, “Why should I be afraid of men? an Almighty power watches over me.” We have no right, then, to unravel these expressions of trust, and to ask whether Jesus expected God to work miracles on occasion to preserve his life. He neither asked nor expected miracles on his behalf. He had no rounded system to explain *how* it was all to happen; but this one thing he knew, that it was the kingdom of God, and that alone, upon which he must bestow his every thought, to which he must direct his every effort, in which he must seek his only wealth.

And the life-choice he himself had made, and which experience had justified so fully, that choice he urged upon all others, and demanded from his followers. We shall find him constantly insisting upon this decisive choice. Surely he had a right to do so.

In thus describing the vocation of the citizens of God’s kingdom he unintentionally drew his own likeness, and this thought gives new value to his parables and exhortations; for who can gaze upon that image and withhold the fulness of respect and admiration? But he requires more than respect and admiration from us. He demands the homage of our imitation.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.

MATTHEW XVIII. 12-14.

WE have now submitted a considerable part of the teaching of Jesus to a special examination. In the following chapters we shall hear and see how the principles contained therein controlled his views of many subjects, and dictated his conduct towards many classes of mankind and under many varied circumstances. But let us first pause a moment to look back, and ask ourselves whether we have dis-

covered what the grand central thought of Jesus really was. Our object in doing so is not only to form a clear conception of the connection and unity of his teaching and the point upon which it converges, but still more to put ourselves into a position from which we can truly understand and justly estimate the line of conduct we shall see him pursue, and the judgments we shall hear him pronounce. If once we have grasped his leading thought, we shall be able to explain his life as the infinitely varied practice which is but the many-sided expression of the simple and uniform theory.

But is it possible to sum up in a few short words the spirit of his teaching,¹ the new element he brought into life, the special thought that made his preaching a true *gospel*?

Undoubtedly it is. We have incidentally referred to this distinguishing conception more than once already. Jesus taught no new system of religious doctrine; indeed, strictly speaking, he cannot be said to have laid down a single fresh article of doctrinal faith. Nor did he teach a new scheme of morals. He had, indeed, certain new moral conceptions, but he never worked them into a systematic whole. This total absence of any thing like a formal system has come spontaneously to light in the preceding chapters. What Jesus really did was to give utterance to a new principle, to make a sublime discovery, which explains all his work and all his teaching, and furnishes the key to the mystery of his own religious genius. This new discovery, this great principle, may be described, according to the side from which it is approached, as *the worth of man* or *the love of God*.

The worth of man! Man, as man, is called to and destined for the highest moral perfection, and, as a consequence, the purest blessedness. Such was the inextinguishable faith of Jesus, his steadfast rule of conduct, his life's unalterable motto. And it was altogether new. In the Roman empire the individual was of no importance except as a part of the great whole, as a citizen of Rome. In Israel man had no rights, no hope, except as a member of the chosen race, a son of Abraham. But for Jesus, man as man had sacred and inalienable rights and a worth that nothing could transcend. And in the mind of Jesus, who brought all things straight into connection with God, this truth assumed this form: Man is by nature God's own child, is capable of bearing God's image, and is the object of His infinite affection. The Supreme Power, before which man bows in adoration, which has traced

¹ See p. 150.

its inlelible law upon his heart, is a power of love , and man's inmost nature is akin to it. Man is akin to God. *God is our Father.* This great, this glorious truth was discovered and proclaimed by Jesus ; and its meaning for each one of us is, that to do and to be good is his true nature and his highest blessedness. It is because man is so truly great, that, as a spiritual being, he must trample down all that is material or push it altogether into the background, since it is too poor and worthless to be the object of his care. It was because each human being has such infinite significance that Jesus felt himself most strongly drawn towards the poor, the oppressed, the despised of the world ; for they had only their humanity to live by, only their humanity to live for. That was their passport to his heart. The first beatitude that passed his lips refers to them. Pointing to them, the Judge declares to the righteous, “ What ye have done to one of the least of these, my brothers, you have done to me ;” and of them Jesus said, making it the crowning work of his ministry, “ The poor have the gospel preached unto them.”¹ It was because the worth of man lies in nothing external, but simply in his being man and therefore the child of God, that Jesus laid such stress on humility and childlike simplicity. Worldly rank is so absolutely insignificant that no man should be puffed up by it.

Jesus quickened in his hearers the sense of their own dignity as moral beings, and at the same time taught them respect for the humblest and least of their fellow-men. As a specimen of the way in which he made these twin results flow from his common principle, we may give the following sayings. We do not vouch for their having been uttered in the order in which they have come down to us, by Jesus himself; but in their present form they are certainly knit together into a single whole by that one central conception. Jesus is speaking of “ offences,” that is to say, of all that tempts us to sin or unbelief, to faithlessness to the higher life and things invisible. He says : —

“ He who receives a little child like this, in my name, receives me ;² but for him who offends one of these little ones, it were better that a millstone were hung about his neck and he were cast into the sea ! Woe to the world because of offences ! for offences must needs come ; yet woe to him by whom they come ! If your hand or your foot offend you, cut it off and cast it from you ! It is better to go into life maimed

¹ Matthew xi. 5

² Matthew xviii. 5 (Mark ix. 37; Luke ix. 48).

or crippled than to be cast into eternal fire with two hands or feet. And if your eye offend you, pluck it out and cast it from you! It is better to go into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be cast into Gehenna. Beware of despising one of these little ones! For I tell you that their guardian angels, as the first in rank, look upon the face of my Father in heaven at all times.”¹ And then he speaks of the divine sympathy with these little ones under the sweet and touching imagery of that well-known parable: “What think you? If a man have a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and seek the one that has strayed? And if he should chance to find it, does he not rejoice more over that one than over the ninety-nine that never strayed? Even so it is the steadfast will of your Father in heaven that not one of these little ones be lost.”²

Such was the fountain of his deep and inexhaustible love of man. We have spoken already of his compassionate sympathy. We constantly read in the Gospels of his being stirred with intensest pity for the multitudes, because of their sad and weary plight, as of sheep without a shepherd;³ and we shall see that he turned with special zeal to “the lost sheep of Israel’s fold,” to the notorious “sinners.” Such was the impulse of his heart, which he could not disobey. So he called to him all who were “weary and heavy laden,” and promised “I will give you rest.” “Take my yoke upon you,” he said, “and learn of me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”⁴ But we must clearly understand what this compassion was. The feeling that inspired Jesus with tenderness towards all men however insignificant, however sinful, had not a touch of that lofty condescension which often passes for sympathy. It was a feeling of unbounded reverence for their humanity. It was on the foundation of this respect that the temple of his love was reared. Even the most degraded human being was still an artistic masterpiece fashioned by the Great Artist, God. As such he must be handled tenderly and reverentially, even while the stains that marred his beauty were being cleansed.

Do you ask how Jesus discovered this new truth of the worth of man and the love of God? We must not suppose,

¹ Luke xvii. 1, 2; Matthew xviii. 6-10 (Mark ix. 42-47).

² Matthew xviii. 12-14; compare Luke xv. 3-7.

³ Matthew ix. 36; Mark vi. 34. ⁴ Matthew xi. 28-30.

on the strength of a few passages in the Gospels, that he ascended from the known to the unknown, and arguing from certain phenomena in the world of Nature and the world of Man¹ reasoned out the lofty conclusion ! No syllogisms or inferences led him to his great result. No strained intellectual effort, no profound speculation or deep line of argument brought him to this discovery. One of the latest writers of the New Testament attributes a saying to him which he never really uttered, but which, nevertheless, is an exact reflection of the truth : “ My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of this doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”² That is to say, Jesus had not invented the truth he preached ; he had neither worked it out by his own penetration, nor woven it into a system by careful argument. The truth had revealed itself to his heart, and all that he did was to reproduce as purely and faithfully as he could that which had forced itself upon him, so to speak ; that which he had learned by his own experience. He *produced* nothing, properly speaking. He simply translated, as best he could, the impressions and emotions he had received from the invisible world. Hence, too, the certainty and decision of his teaching. For he knew that he had something more and better to communicate than mere personal views or conclusions reached by argument, more and better than mere changing fallible opinions. What he strove to impart to others was that moral truth which he had learned by the surest method,—his own experience ; those impressions he had received from God in his own inner life. For all the discoveries we make on intellectual or philosophic ground bear about them a more or less strongly marked character of uncertainty as the badge of their human origin. But we regard the questions of the moral life in a wholly different light ; and rightly so. For here it is not we who find out the newly-discovered truth, but it that finds us out ; and it bears about it such a mark of its divine origin that we know it will never have to be surrendered, but is a conquest gained for ever. It was in himself, therefore, and by turning to his own heart, that Jesus discovered who God is and what man is. By his own experience he had come to know that God is our Father, that He is love ; for he had experienced the indescribably sweet and irresistible attraction, the unutterably blessed influence, of that sacred Power above us, which unfolds its will in the human heart and conscience.

¹ Matthew v. 45, vii. 11, *et seqq.*

² John vii. 16, 17.

He had “tasted and seen” that unreserved obedience to this will is the fullest life, the purest joy; that communion with this God is peace to our souls; that God himself is our highest good. And thus he had also come to know in himself the nature, the calling, the dignity, the destiny of man; and the immeasurable treasure of his love, the singular strength of his sense of fellowship with others, his consciousness of brotherhood with all men, would not allow him to doubt one moment that what was true of him was true of all, no single one excepted. Hence the infinite esteem he endeavored to impress upon every one for each individual man, as something higher than the world with all its treasures: “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul,—if he lose himself? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?”¹

Now from this principle flow all those “new things” that Jesus brought forth from the treasure-chamber of his heart and offered to mankind. We shall have repeated occasion to note this. It was this principle in the strength of which he undertook the giant task of reforming the world; and it is a principle so exalted that to this day it has never received its due in the bosom of Christianity, and though it is still striving for supremacy as it has ever striven, yet it is only few that so much as comprehend it,—few indeed that put it into practice!

With this “gospel of the kingdom” Jesus journeyed all through Galilee, in every town and every hamlet, preaching in the synagogues. Wherever he went he strove to heal the sickness of the soul, to bring the disheartened, the crushed, the sinful to themselves again, by making them feel the love of God. But this great task was far too much for the powers of a single man. “The harvest indeed is great,” he said to his disciples, “but the laborers are few. Pray, then, to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send laborers to gather it in.”²

¹ Matthew xvi. 26 (Mark viii. 36, 37; Luke ix. 25).

² Matthew iv. 23, ix. 35, 37, 38 (Luke x. 2).

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS.

MATTHEW X. 1-14; MARK IX. 14-29; LUKE VIII. 1-3, IX. 51-62,
XIV. 25-35.¹

YOU will remember that very soon after beginning his public work Jesus had drawn certain associates round him.² During his stay at Capernaum and his journeys through Galilee, others were from time to time moved by their own hearts or led by his invitation to join him permanently. This was but natural. In Capernaum and the other cities of Galilee there could not fail to be those whose interest was thoroughly roused by what they heard, who longed to enjoy the new teacher's instruction more continuously; and who therefore determined to accompany him wherever he went, some for a longer, some for a shorter period, until domestic cares or the occupations they had left recalled them, or until their zeal had cooled, or possibly the new master's free style of thought and life had given them offence. And thus the number of his followers rose and fell. Indeed, tradition exaggerates the number of his hearers to thousands in some cases.³ Those who constantly accompanied him, or at any rate proclaimed their intention of doing so, were called his disciples.

There was nothing unusual in this. The ancient prophets were often supported by more or less numerous adherents, or at least associated one constant companion with their labors.⁴ In the days of Jesus the most celebrated Scribes had their avowed adherents, and we have already spoken of the disciples of John.⁵ We should therefore naturally expect to find a body of disciples gathering round Jesus. And from this general body he selected twelve special friends to be his constant companions. Whether he called them all at the same time, as Mark and Luke declare, or some at one time and some at another, as is far more likely, in any case they accompanied him on all his expeditions, and when possible eat

¹ Matthew viii. 19-22, x. 37-39; xvii. 14-21; Mark iii. 13-19, vi. 7-13; Luke vi. 12-16, ix. 1-6, 37-43 a.

² See pp. 127-129.

³ See pp. 148, 149, and Luke xii. 1.

⁴ Isaiah viii. 2, 16; Jeremiah xxxvi. 4; compare vol. ii. chap. xii. p. 138.

⁵ See pp. 108, 109.

at the same table and slept under the same roof with him To them accordingly we must first devote our attention.

What made Jesus enter into such special relations with these twelve? The field of his labors was so extended. He was not content simply to preach the kingdom of God to the multitudes, but must often turn to this or that individual man and strive to quicken his feeling of human dignity, his sense of God's love. And because this work was so great and varied he felt the pressing want of fellow-laborers. But he could not have such helpers unless he trained them to the work himself; and this he could only do by keeping them constantly near him and under his influence, and so gradually fitting them for their task by his teaching and example.

We must be on our guard against misconceptions. The names of Master and Disciple naturally suggest regular instruction or the communication of a more or less elaborate set of doctrines; but this idea is wholly misleading, for the Apostles afterwards show most unmistakably that they had never received any systematic teaching from Jesus. Indeed, he does not ever seem expressly to have communicated his special views on any doctrinal subject to them; he merely taught them incidentally, as appropriate occasions offered themselves, or when he was directly questioned or pressed for instructions. Of course these Apostles heard more of his sayings and exhortations than any one else did, and it is probably to their care that we owe most of what has been preserved in the Gospels. But the position they took up afterwards, especially their fidelity to Jewish forms of worship, proves conclusively that, strictly speaking, Jesus taught no doctrine at all. Doctrinal instruction was never a part of his preaching; and he contented himself with proclaiming a few great principles, and leaving his hearers free in most respects to apply them to the outward forms of religion for themselves. What we have already¹ said about Jesus as a teacher of the people applies equally well to his intercourse with his friends. His object was not to instruct them in the ordinary sense, but to educate them; not to give them intellectual or doctrinal, but moral and religious, guidance; not to stamp certain articles of belief upon their minds, but to exercise an influence upon their hearts and consciences; not to implant any thing in them, but to develop what was in them already. There is no trace in his teaching of such special rules of life as those given by John; a fact which sometimes scandalized the pious

¹ See p. 147.

Israelites. To use his own expression, he associated with his disciples as a bridegroom does with his groomsmen. He never made them fast, or observed that they had neglected to wash their hands before taking food ; nor did he even teach them a prayer, so that when they felt the want of one they had to ask him for it.¹ From this perfect ease and freedom we may gather that the Twelve themselves did not belong to the devout and cultivated circles of the day ; otherwise such conduct would have been little to their taste. They were simple men of the people, of healthy and vigorous spirit, full of their own narrow and even coarse prejudices, but receptive and tractable enough on the whole, very susceptible to impressions, and full of zeal.

If Jesus laid any special stress on the number *twelve*, it was probably with a reference to the number of the tribes of ancient Israel, which typified or foreshadowed the kingdom of God and the chosen people of the future.² But the number is certainly so far accidental that if Jesus had not been able to find as many as twelve whom he thought suited for the task he would have been content with fewer ; and if, on the other hand, after choosing the Twelve, he had met with others who seemed particularly well qualified, he would not have scrupled to increase the number. Luke tells us³ that he called them *Apostles* (or “ those sent out ”) ; but even if we substitute the Hebrew word that Jesus would have used for the Greek *Apostle*, the statement will still be incorrect. Long after the death of Jesus, when Paul rivalled or opposed the Twelve, and laid claim to the title of Apostle, — or still later when the apostolic doctrine or tradition began to be regarded as the standard of truth by which the disputes of the communities must be decided, — then the title of *Apostle* was said to have originated with Jesus himself ; but during his lifetime the Twelve were simply called his disciples.

The character, the position, and the occupation of most of these men are unknown to us. Besides the brothers Simon and Andrew (sons of Jona), and James and John (sons of Zebedee), all of whom were fishermen, we find Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, James (the son of Alphæus) and Lebbæus, Simon the Canaanite (or Zelot) and Judas of Karioth, a place in Judæa. Of these, Simon is em-

¹ Luke xi. 1.

² Matthew xix. 28 (Luke xxii. 30); Revelation xxi. 12, 14, 21; compare James i. 1.

³ Luke vi. 13.

phatically described as *the first* in the Jewish-Christian Gospel, as though he were the head of the Apostolic company. This agrees with the opinion prevalent in the apostolic age, but is quite contrary to the intention of Jesus.¹ We know this Simon as a man of a very lovable character, fiery in spirit, quick in feeling, hasty in word and deed, sometimes to the point of headlong rashness. He bore the surname Cephas, or “rock,” which was translated into its Greek equivalent *Peter*, when the gospel was preached to the heathen world. He probably owed it to some accidental circumstance unknown to us. Our Gospels tell us that Jesus himself gave him this name;² but with all his admirable qualities it was just in rock-like steadfastness of purpose that Simon was altogether wanting. He is sometimes more like a reed shaken by the wind than a rock, and we can hardly believe that Jesus was so completely mistaken in his estimate as to call him a rock. There is far more probability in the tradition that Jesus gave the name of Boanerges, or “sons of thunder,” to James and John, in virtue of their impetuous and stormy force of character.³ Among the Twelve themselves, these three, to whom Andrew (Simon’s brother, of whom we know nothing more) is sometimes added,⁴ were again selected to enjoy the special confidence of their Master. They always went with him, even when from the nature of the case a greater company was impossible.

As regards the others, we have only to observe that Matthew is called “the publican” in the first Gospel, through a confusion with Levi; and that, instead of Lebbæus, Thaddæus appears in the second Gospel, and Judas, son of James, in the third Gospel and the Book of Acts. On this last point the tradition seems to have been uncertain, unless we are to account for the variation by supposing that one of the original Twelve was removed by an early death, or fell away from Jesus. The second Simon appears to have formerly belonged to the party of the Zelots,⁵ whence his surname. Finally, the last named of the Twelve, Judas Iscariot, is always spoken of as “the betrayer.” We shall meet with him again in the history of the death of Jesus.

Whether Jesus was fortunate in his choice is a question which we shall discuss presently. Here we need only observe that the remark already made with reference to the first four

¹ Compare Matthew xxiii. 6-12.

² Compare Matthew xvi. 18.

³ Mark iii. 17.

⁴ Mark i. 29, xiii. 3.

⁵ See pp. 3-6.

is equally applicable to the other eight,¹—they must have known Jesus, and he must have singled them out and carefully observed them before their calling. But on the side of Jesus the choice was still an act of faith in God; an experiment or venture, the result of which he left in God's hands. This is the meaning of Luke's statement that Jesus went up a mountain one evening and spent the whole night in prayer to God, and when it was day called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them. We must further note that none of these men had the faintest suspicion at first that the Master to whom they had attached themselves was to be the Messiah. They followed him at first simply as a prophet or teacher of the people, and after a time more especially because he had given such a powerful stimulus to their expectation of the kingdom of God.

Meanwhile the Gospels tell us not only that Jesus trained the Twelve to become his fellow-workers, but also that he actually began to set them to the work. On a certain day, we read, he called them to him and sent them out, two and two, to announce the approach of the kingdom of God, giving them power at the same time to cast out demons:—

“ Go to no heathen city, and enter no place in Samaria, but rather go to the lost sheep of the people of Israel.

“ Go forth and preach, saying, ‘ The kingdom of heaven is at hand ! ’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. You have received without paying a price, give to others without asking payment.

“ Provide no money in your girdles, no wallet, no extra coat or sandals or stick; for the laborer is worth his maintenance.

“ And when you come to any city or village, inquire who is worthy of your choice, and remain with him until you leave the place. And when you enter his house give it your blessing; and if the house be worthy, may the greeting of peace be fulfilled for it, but if not, let it return again to you. And wherever they will not receive you nor listen to your words, when you leave the house or city shake the unclean dust from off your feet as a witness against it ! ”

Did Jesus really send out the Apostles thus? On the whole, we are inclined to think he did; though many difficulties are involved in the supposition, and it is very hard to come to any conclusion. Let us examine the question a little more closely. In the first place, Mark and Luke tell us that

¹ See p. 127.

the Apostles actually did go about preaching repentance ; that they cast out many devils ; anointed many sick people with oil and restored them to health ; and finally returned to Jesus with an account of all that they had done. Upon this, we are told, he took them aside to give them a little rest, for the people pressed upon them so incessantly that they had not even time to take food. But we have every reason to suspect that this is pure invention. The first Gospel has not a word of it, probably because it was not mentioned by the oldest authorities. This is far more likely than that it was accidentally omitted. Matthew simply mentions that the Apostles were sent out on this mission, but he has never told us of their being chosen ; nor does he ever say what they did on their journey, or when they returned to Jesus. It is possible that this is an instance of superior historical accuracy, and that the real course of things was this : that the Twelve were summoned one at one time, another at another ; that they were afterwards sent out by Jesus to preach, but accomplished little or nothing, and soon returned to the Master. But it is also possible that Matthew mentions the sending out, but not the return, because the Apostles were really commissioned by Jesus to preach to Israel, but not during his own life, so that they could not return to him. Again, we should have said that the disciples were too worldly-minded and too little penetrated by their Master's spirit to be qualified for heralds of the kingdom of heaven. But, then, Jesus was always inclined to judge of others by himself, and so to think better of men than they really deserved as yet. Finally, Matthew puts a discourse into the mouth of Jesus on this occasion, the greater part of which can only have been delivered during the last days of his life, when he foresaw that he must soon permanently hand over his life-task to his disciples.¹ The case is somewhat different with the verses already quoted. The genuineness of a part of them is as well established as that of any saying of Jesus whatever, for Paul himself refers to them.² But are these elaborate regulations as to the equipment of the Apostles quite appropriate to a journey of a few days' duration only ? Does that precept to shake off the dust of the unfriendly city breathe the spirit of him who came not to destroy but to save ? And, above all, the prohibition to preach to any one except the Jews certainly owes its origin to a later Jewish-Christian editor, who looked upon the Messianic kingdom as the heritage of Israel alone. This prohi-

¹ Matthew x. 5 b.-42.

² 1 Corinthians ix. 6 ff., especially verses 14, 18.

bition is put first of all, as though it were the most important point; as if the very nature of the case did not require the first words of the exhortation to be, "Go forth and preach!" as if the great dispute of the apostolic times could have been present then to the mind of Jesus; as if the disciples would have been likely to neglect their countrymen on this little journey, and turn to heathens and Samaritans; as if the "lost" Israelite was not almost on the same level as the "unclean" heathen and Samaritan; and as if Jesus himself would have drawn back had he chanced to meet a heathen or Samaritan on his way!

But in spite of all this there is so much to be said in support of the Apostles really having been sent out by Jesus that we cannot give up the fact itself. It might very naturally give rise to the name of *Apostle*. Jesus refers to it the evening before his death in a saying which has every appearance of being genuine.¹ In the exhortation itself there are one or two points that are hardly explicable as injunctions given to the disciples with a view to their labors after the death of Jesus. It may be noticed specially that the symbolical description of their work,—healing the sick in soul, waking the indifferent from the sleep of death, cleansing those tainted with the leprosy of sin, together with their preaching of repentance and of the near approach of the kingdom of heaven,—all correspond very closely with the early work and teaching of Jesus himself. And finally the Master's need of fellow-workers was so great that we should almost have expected him to make some such experiment.

But in any case it was no more than an experiment, and one which did not prove encouraging. If the disciples really were sent out to preach by Jesus, their mission bore but little fruit and was not repeated.

We have already said that the immediate followers of Jesus were not confined to the chosen Twelve. Even when we are told that he turned to his disciples we must generally understand the wider circle of followers, which rose and fell according to special circumstances. Of these disciples we know nothing; but we cannot help thinking that some of them understood and applied, preserved and handed down their Master's principles better than the Apostles themselves. If so, we may trace to their influence the freer movement which made itself felt, soon after the death of Jesus, among the

¹ Luke xxii. 35.

communities that confessed his name.¹ All we know is that wherever Jesus went he found friends. During his stay in Jerusalem, at the end of his life, we shall find examples in Joseph of Arimathea, Simon of Bethany, the man who received him at Jerusalem, and the owner of the garden at Gethsemane. We have now to mention expressly and separately the women friends of Jesus.

It seems that his preaching gained a ready hearing from the Jewish women, and made a deep impression on them. Women are generally more religious than men, and we are told by other authorities that the Jewish women specially favored the Pharisaic movement on account of its strictness. It is scarcely surprising, then, that Jesus should have excited their interest so thoroughly that not a few of them ranged themselves among his hearers,² and gave him frequent proofs of their reverential affection.³ Accordingly, we find him accused, on his trial, “of drawing women and children away from the true religion.”

It must have been exceedingly difficult, on every ground, for women to attach themselves to a popular teacher who was constantly travelling from place to place. Indeed, domestic or other special duties would make it simply impossible in the majority of cases. But, in spite of all this, there were certain women who accompanied him on his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem to the Passover;⁴ and not only so, but even while he was still travelling about in Galilee there were some who attached themselves as closely as possible to the company of his disciples,⁵ going with him on his journeys, and enjoying his intercourse and his teaching. At the same time, they eagerly seized every occasion that presented itself of being of service to him.

For although the wants of Jesus and his twelve friends and other companions were to a large extent supplied by the liberal hospitality of the East, yet there must have been occasions upon which this hospitality left ample room for a woman's help to be of the greatest value. Even the bare sustenance of the travellers may sometimes have depended on the resources of these women, for the disciples had of course given up for the time the occupations by which they earned their bread, and few of them had any fortune. This

¹ See p. 146.

² Matthew xiv. 21, xv. 38.

³ Matthew xix. 13, xxvi. 7; Luke xi. 27, xxiii. 27.

⁴ Matthew xxvii. 55 (Mark xv. 41; Luke xxiii. 49).

⁵ Luke viii. 1-8; compare Mark xv. 40, 41.

assistance seems all the more natural when we observe that one of the women was the wife of Zebedee, and the mother of James and John. Mark calls her Salome. Another was Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses; so that if this James is the son of Alphaeus, which is not certain however, she too was the mother of an Apostle. The mention of these women furnishes a very valuable clew to the teacher's means of subsistence.

Most of their names have of course been forgotten, but a few have been preserved in one way or another. The best known of them all is Mary, who is always mentioned before the rest, and is called Magdalene, after the place of her birth, to distinguish her from others of the same name. Luke also mentions Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna. He believes that all these women had been cured of possession, or some other disease, by Jesus, who had cast out seven devils from Mary Magdalene. Perhaps, in accordance with the idea that more than one evil spirit might fix upon the same victim,¹ this last trait signifies a high degree of nervous suffering. It is the same Evangelist who gives us the names of two other women who were among the friends of Jesus, and describes the following domestic scene:²—

On one of his journeys Jesus came to a certain place in Galilee, where a woman called Martha received him. This woman had a sister, Mary, living with her, and both of them were proud to receive their guest, and busied themselves most zealously to make every thing go off well and entertain him pleasantly. But in the midst of their preparations Mary came into the room in which Jesus was speaking,—perhaps she came to fetch something, or to put things straight,—and there she stayed listening to what he said until she forgot the meal she was preparing, forgot her sister, forgot every thing, and sat down at his feet to listen. Of course it was not long before Martha missed her. At first she tried to manage without her, but she was so oppressed with all that there was to do, and so anxious about the meal she was getting ready, and wanted so much to consult her sister on this point and to get her to see after that, that at last she could bear it no longer; and so she broke into the room, stood before Jesus, and, pointing to Mary, cried with some excitement, “Rabbi! how can you let my sister desert me and leave me all the work? Tell her to come and help me!” But Jesus judged far otherwise of Mary's conduct. He felt the

¹ Matthew xii. 45; Mark v. 9.

² Luke x. 38-42

kindness of the good woman of the house, but the involuntary homage of Mary's undivided thoughts pleased him far more. Mary had sought the kingdom of heaven before all, and that was why she had forgotten earthly things. And this was far better than even the kindest thought for his mere personal needs. "O Martha, Martha!" he cried, shaming her with the gentle tones of his quiet and loving rebuke, "how many things trouble and perplex your soul! One thing is needful, and Mary has made the good choice from which she must not, cannot, be held back."

We still possess a remarkable series of narratives which illustrate the unshrinking firmness and directness with which Jesus pressed upon his immediate followers that definite resolution to postpone all things to the kingdom of God which he had made himself and had prescribed to others. He was far from wishing to turn back any one who desired to join him, but yet he did not accept all offers of assistance unconditionally. On the contrary, he met such offers with a solemn warning, and set forth his demands in the hardest possible form, that none might join him thoughtlessly and then repent their haste.

For instance, once when he was on the point of crossing the lake (most likely when the wonderful impression made by his first appearance was still fresh), a Scribe came to him and declared, "Master! I will follow you wheresoever you go." Jesus did not repel him, but solemnly reminded him of what his offer meant. It meant the renunciation of all rest and ease, of all thoughts of a quiet, happy home; it meant a life of weary wandering like that of the Master he would join. "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head."

Another time one of his disciples came to him and said, "Master! let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus refused: "Follow me," he said, "and leave it to the (spiritually) dead to bury their dead. As for you, you have weightier work to do, even to preach the kingdom of heaven."

It was the need of "fellow-laborers for the harvest" that made Jesus utter such words. And so another time, when some one said to him, "I will follow you, Rabbi! but let me first take leave of them at home," Jesus refused even this request. All former ties must be broken, or they would hinder his followers in the task he laid upon them. "Whoso-

ever puts his hand to the plough, and then looks back, is not fit to work for the kingdom of heaven."

When we come to the journey to Jerusalem we shall meet with another similar event, but for the present these will suffice. It cannot be denied that the last two demands make a painful impression of unnatural hardness upon us. We cannot tell whether any special circumstances made these two men particularly likely to prove faithless to their good resolve if they delayed its execution or returned to bid their relatives farewell; but the events seem to place us at a period when the opposition to Jesus had already risen high, and decision was more necessary than ever. It is very important to bear in mind that these sayings do not stand alone, but are simply special applications of a general rule laid down by Jesus. Once, when the eagerness to join him was more than usually strong, he said: "If any one comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple!" It need hardly be said that the word "hate" should not be taken literally. Matthew has "whosoever loves them more than me," but "hate" is certainly the original word. The Hebrew idiom is characterized both by poverty in its vocabulary and by great poetic force, and Jesus intentionally chose the strongest possible word to express the definite choice and the definite victory in the contest between two irreconcilable dispositions. We must be ready, if need be, to shake ourselves entirely free from our nearest and dearest relatives, to break every tie that binds us to them without hesitation or reserve, and even to sacrifice the love they bear us, for the great purpose of our lives.

We shall see presently that Jesus himself had been compelled to satisfy this demand, had met and wrestled through this bitter necessity, before he laid the claim upon others. He would have no half-hearted work. He demanded from others what he had given himself,—unconditional self-consecration to the task imposed by God, to the hastening of God's kingdom. No difficulties must be feared, every hindrance must be swept away, extremest danger braved, and no sacrifice withheld! And when the fidelity and steadfastness, the self-consecration and self-sacrifice, in a word the whole life of Jesus, had been crowned by his death on the cross, the demand he made from his disciples was thrown into a form which he cannot possibly have used himself, but which perfectly embodies his spirit: "No one can be my disciple who

loes not take up his cross and follow me." It is certain that Jesus never used the word "cross" in a sense which would have been wholly unintelligible during his life; but it is quite natural that the manner of his death should have made the "cross" the consecrated symbol, not indeed of suffering in general, but of the suffering endured for the kingdom of God's sake, the painful aspects of the Christian's life-task, with all its toil and strife and sorrow. The form of the saying, then, is of later date, but the thought itself is certainly the thought of Jesus.

Had he any right or any power to demand less from others than he had exacted of himself? It would have been an insult to them and treachery to the cause! "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to equal his teacher, and for the servant to equal his master."¹ But then it was far better never to begin at all, than once having joined the teacher to desert him. If the salt had lost its savor it was fit for nothing.² "Before you begin, reflect. Have you the moral strength which such a work demands? Which one of you, if he had resolved to build a tower, would not first sit down calmly and calculate how much it would cost, and whether he had the means of carrying out so great a work? Otherwise he might lay the foundation, and then discover, to his own confusion, that he could not finish the building itself; and all the passers-by who saw it would laugh him to scorn and say, 'This man began to build, but he soon had to stop!' Think, then, once more! Are you able to resist and overcome the entreaties, the tears, the threats, the scorn, the opposition of the strong and influential,—every thing, in short, that would draw you aside from the kingdom of God? If not, never enter upon the contest at all! Suppose a tributary prince revolts, and the king to whom he owes allegiance advances with a great army to reduce him to obedience, does he not calmly and fully deliberate with his advisers and generals to see whether, under all the circumstances, he with his ten thousand men has any chance of offering a successful resistance to an enemy twice as numerous? And if he sees that his power is insufficient he sends ambassadors, while the other is still far off, humbly to beg for terms of peace. Even so not one of you is fit to be my disciple unless he is ready to give up every thing he has. Test yourselves, therefore, for much is involved in your choice."

¹ Matthew x. 24, 25 a.

² See p. 163.

We shall understand these stringent demands much better when we remember the high significance which Jesus attached to the personal work and influence of his fellow-laborers. They were to be "the salt of the earth, the light of the world." He urged them to lay aside all care for temporal things, and to trust in God; and declared that their final bliss would correspond to their lofty calling. All this explains his paradoxical saying:¹ "He who finds his (earthly) life shall lose his (true) life, but he who loses his life [for my sake, for the truth, for the kingdom of God] shall find it." Or, as it is elsewhere put,² "He who seeks to save his life shall lose it, but he who loses it shall save it." This was his own motto, the rule from which his own life never swerved; and by making the same demands of his disciples he shows his respect for them and his constant effort to put them on the same footing as himself. He employed them, indeed, as messengers and interpreters to give his teaching the utmost possible publicity, and said, "There is nothing secret that shall not be revealed, and nothing hidden that shall not be disclosed. What I tell you in darkness declare in light; what you hear in the ear proclaim on the house-tops;"³ he sought to rouse their courage by the anticipation of rewards in the kingdom of heaven, and declared, "Whosoever confesses me before men, him will I confess before my heavenly Father; whosoever denies me before men, him will I deny before my Father;"⁴ but he never lost sight of the essential equality he desired to establish between himself and them, and expressly declared, "He who receives you receives me; and he who receives me receives Him who sent me."⁵

Many of these sayings were addressed in the first instance, if not exclusively, to the Twelve; and to them, accordingly, our attention naturally returns. Did Jesus find his lofty hopes in them fulfilled? Had he cause to rejoice in the selection he had made, and in the labor he had bestowed in training his twelve companions? For the present we will leave the enigmatical character of Judas out of consideration; but even then the question is hard to answer. The Twelve certainly remained true, even when hostility to their Master ran highest. It is

¹ Matthew x. 39 (Luke ix. 24).

² Mark viii. 35 (Matthew xvi. 25; Luke xvii. 33).

³ Matthew x. 26, 27 (Luke xii. 2, 3).

⁴ Matthew x. 32, 33 (Luke xii. 8, 9).

⁵ Matthew x. 40.

their glory to have been faithful when many who had hailed the appearance of Jesus with acclamation dropped away from him.¹ They sacrificed every thing — relatives, employment, closest ties, and dearest interests — to join themselves to him, and work with him for the kingdom of God.² This was much. But Jesus had built so many hopes upon them ! He had hoped that they would understand him and sympathize with him ; that they would share his love and his zeal ; in a word, that they would in the highest sense *live* with him, and so recom pense him for the loss of that love from his nearest relatives that he had been obliged to sacrifice.³ But it was not alone or chiefly of himself that he had thought. It was far more of the cause for which he labored, — the establishment of the kingdom of God. And in his most exalted expectations he was constantly disappointed.⁴ It is true that he had often cause to rejoice. His gospel of the kingdom, which Scribes and Pharisees could not receive, found its way to simple souls ; and once he poured out the joy of his heart in the cry of praise : “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed these things to little children, though they be hidden from the wise and prudent. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight ! ”⁵ and though we must not confine the application of these words to the Twelve alone, far less must we exclude them from it. But, on the other hand, he was often grievously disappointed in them.

It is true that we must be on our guard in this matter as we read some of the stories in the Gospels ; for the writers sometimes seem purposely to place the Twelve — the Apostles of the Jews — in an unfavorable light. But the narratives are too consistent and too numerous to leave room for any serious doubt. More than once the Twelve offended their Master by their petty ambition and self-assertion, as they quarrelled about which was the greatest. Again and again he had to rebuke their pride ; and his exhortations to humility and ministering love, the only true greatness, seemed to make but little impression on them.⁶ The one sought to take rank before the other,⁷ and selfish and interested motives were by no means strange to them. No wonder, then, that they often showed their inability to comprehend their Mas-

¹ Luke xxii. 28.

² Matthew xix. 27 (Mark x. 28 ; Luke xviii. 28).

³ Matthew xii. 48-50 (Mark iii. 33-35 ; Luke viii. 21) ; Matthew xix. 29
Mark x. 29, 30 ; Luke xviii. 29, 30).

⁴ Compare pp. 129, 146, 184.

⁵ Matthew xi. 25, 26 (Luke x. 21).

⁶ Matthew xviii. 1 : Mark ix. 34 ; Luke ix. 46, xxi. 24.

⁷ Matthew xx. 20-28 (Mark x. 35-45).

ter's teaching and principles. We are constantly told that they did not understand him, and he himself sometimes complains of their obtuseness.¹ The religious prejudices of their people were too deeply ingrained in them to be expelled by their Master's preaching of a spiritual kingdom; and to the very last they dreamed of a king arrayed in outward splendor, and of posts of wealth and honor for themselves. Their ideas remained incurably material in spite of every warning.² On one occasion they displeased Jesus greatly by trying to send away some little children that had been brought to him. There could not have been a clearer proof of how little they understood his spirit.³ Another striking instance of this want of sympathy is recorded in a story which accurately depicts the disposition of the disciples, though its historical truth is by no means above suspicion. It runs as follows:

Jesus had set out on his journey to Jerusalem. He intended to take the shortest way, which led through Samaria, and had sent on some of his disciples to the first village over the border to secure hospitality for the band of thirteen men. But the Samaritans refused to receive him, because he was on a journey to a feast at the City of the Temple, while they believed that Gerizim was the only place at which lawful worship could be offered. At this insult the sons of Zebedee burst into indignant wrath. "Lord!" said they, "shall we not call down fire from heaven to consume these wretches?" The example of Elijah⁴ was evidently before their minds. But Jesus turned round and rebuked them. Did they not know that as his disciples they must breathe a very different spirit from that of the great prophet of the ancient covenant?—not the stern spirit of wrath and vengeance, but the gentle spirit of redeeming, reconciling love. So the travellers went, at the command of Jesus, to another village.

From the last period of Jesus' life in Galilee we have another story, which should be mentioned here, for both in its original and its present form it was intended to show the slender capacity of the disciples. Let us listen to it:—

Once on a time Jesus left his disciples alone for a little while, and when he returned he found them surrounded by a crowd of people, and hard pressed by certain Scribes. When he asked what it meant, one of the crowd cried out, "Master! I brought my son here because he has a devil that

¹ Mark iv. 13, vi. 52, vii. 17, 18, ix. 6, 10, 32, x. 38.

² Matthew xvi. 22, 23, xx. 20–23 (Mark viii. 32, 33, x. 35–40).

³ See p. 174. ⁴ 2 Kings i. 10–12; compare vol. ii. chap. xi. p. 124.

makes him dumb ; and when it seizes him he has fearful convulsions, and foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, and then falls down motionless. And I asked your disciples to cast out the devil, but they could not." When Jesus heard of the feebleness of his fellow-workers his patience for a moment gave way, and he cried, "O faithless and perverse generation ! How long shall I be with you ? How long shall I bear you ? Bring him here to me !" But hardly had the boy been brought to Jesus when he had another fit, and fell in convulsions to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. "How long has he suffered thus?" said Jesus to the father. "Since infancy," was the reply ; "and the wonder is that he is still alive, for the devil has many a time hurled him into fire or water to kill him. But for pity's sake help us if you can !" "If I can?" repeated Jesus. "Every thing is possible to him who has faith." Then the father cried from the bottom of his heart, "I believe it. But my faith is weak. Help me !" And Jesus, seeing how the people kept running to the place, turned to the boy and said, "Deaf and dumb spirit ! I command you to come out of him and return to him no more !" A shriek and a convulsion followed the command ; and then the child lay so still that most of the bystanders thought him dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him ; and he stood up restored. A few moments afterwards, when the Master had retired to the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could not we drive it out?" And he replied, "This kind of devil cannot be expelled except by prayer and fasting."

Matthew says that the boy was moon-struck, that is to say, that he had regular attacks when the moon was waxing. Luke makes him an only child. In other respects Mark is the fullest. Several objections might be urged against the story in its completest form, but they are less applicable to the shorter and simpler narratives of the first and third Gospels. To take the last words of the story, for instance, how could Jesus enjoin those fasts which he never observed himself, and from which he publicly released his disciples?¹ How could the boy hear what Jesus said, and shriek, if he was deaf and dumb? But we lay no stress on these and other such points ; for the original and historical elements of the story may probably still be detected. To say nothing of the great accuracy with which the symptoms are described, we

¹ Matthew ix. 15 (Mark ii. 19; Luke v. 34).

may note that it is very probable that when the disciples, perhaps at the command or suggestion of Jesus himself, attempted to imitate him in curing demoniacs they sometimes succeeded, but were sometimes put to shame. Now the record of such a failure is the chief object of this story, and it shows us that this practice of casting out devils, though undertaken in all sympathy and love for the sufferers, was always a very delicate affair.¹ A failure, such as might well occur, threw the exorcist into a very critical position. But it is especially noteworthy that the disciples of Jesus did not even approach their Master's power. They fell far short of him, because they lacked that true self-reliance which is needed for success in any thing.² For though they may have had enough of the self-confidence which often passes for true self-reliance, they had far too little of the real trust in themselves which would urge them to pray, and would be strengthened in its turn by prayer; which is religious in its very nature, and coincides with trust in God. It was, therefore, with a correct instinct that an undoubtedly genuine saying of Jesus, "he who has faith can do all things," was taken up into the story; and this saying, together with the reproach that escaped the Master in a moment of impatience, constitutes another thoroughly historical feature of the narrative. To the power of faith nothing is impossible! Such was indeed the motto of Jesus; and Matthew therefore very appropriately makes him explain the failure of his disciples by the words, "It comes of your want of faith. For I tell you, if you had faith like a grain of mustard seed [small as yet, but full of life and power even now], you might say to this mountain, 'Depart hence!' and it would go; and nothing would be impossible to you."

A faith that "can remove mountains" of difficulty, that can accomplish not only what seems impossible, but what would really be utterly impossible without it,—such a faith is spoken of elsewhere as well as here.³ On another occasion, when the Twelve asked him to "increase their faith," Jesus is said to have answered in almost the same words: "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, 'Be thou plucked up and planted in the sea!' and it would obey you." It seems, then, that Jesus used this metaphor on more than one occasion.⁴

¹ See pp. 135, 136.

² See pp. 135, 136.

³ 1 Corinthians xiii. 2; compare Psalm xlvi. 2.

⁴ Matthew xxi. 21, 22; Mark xi. 22-24; Luke xvii. 5, 6; compare Mark xvi. 17, 18; Matthew xiv. 31.

In a word, the story gives us a faithful picture of the deficiencies of the disciples, or rather of their marked inferiority to their Master. And this leads us to a general remark. Inasmuch as the Twelve were always with Jesus, we involuntarily make use of them to enable us to form a comparative estimate of the character of Jesus himself. And indeed they actually furnish the best basis for such an estimate we have. Regarded from this point of view, the disciples constantly display so marked an inferiority, hardly admitting of any comparison at all, that we may safely say their lives and characters do more than any one or any thing else to bring the greatness of Jesus into the full light. To excel among mean or commonplace companions is nothing; but these disciples were men of any thing but ordinary virtue. They were the picked men of their time, and in many respects were truly noble. What could exalt Jesus more than a comparison which shows how far he stood above even such men as these? If the Apostles make an unfavorable impression upon us, we must ascribe it to the fact that we always see them close by Jesus. Otherwise we should probably let many of their failings pass unnoticed; but, as it is, they contrast too sharply with his exalted excellence. It is with no want of respect for them that we say, that their small-mindedness and his great nobility of soul; their narrow prejudices and his striking originality and unconditional fidelity to truth; their material expectations and his deep and spiritual conception of the kingdom of God; their self-seeking impulses and his unwearyed steadfastness in self-denial and self-sacrifice; their weakness and his moral strength; their faithlessness and his mountain-moving faith,—all stand in such sharp contrast to each other that our wondering reverence for him rises each moment.

From this account of the friends of Jesus it must be evident that he, with all his longing to impart himself to others and find support in their sympathy, must have felt a grievous want more than once in the course of his public ministry,—a feeling that he was not understood by any one, that he stood in a certain sense alone. This fate, indeed, he shared with other exceptionally great men who have been raised by their very loftiness of spirit far above those around them, and have longed in vain for attachments worthy of their great hearts and full communion with others in their highest life. It was only to God that Jesus could pour out all his soul without fear of being painfully checked. Once in the Gospel we catch the

echo of a sad assertion that his heavenly Father alone understood him, that no one knew him except God ; but the doctrinal speculations of later times have misunderstood the saying, disguised it almost past recognition, and turned it into a piece of self-exaltation of which Jesus could not possibly have been guilty.¹

In yet another respect Jesus stood almost alone. He had not sought for personal friends so much as for fellow-workers ; for such he rightly judged were indispensable to the fulfilment of his giant task. And in this hope also he found himself, at least for the moment, disappointed. But still he judged of others by himself, and never doubted that they might become like him ; however far from him they stood as yet, still he trusted that they would at last be strong enough² for tasks for which they were not fit as yet. He seems also to have foreseen the possibility that was afterwards realized, and for which he must have hoped, — the possibility that others might excel the Twelve in influence and zeal for the kingdom of God, and so take rank above them.³

Meanwhile he sought and found in God strength to pursue his way. In Him Jesus was never disappointed. Whatever demands were made on him, communion with his Father, and His all-sufficient strength, enabled him to accomplish his task even though he stood alone.

Was not this true greatness ?



CHAPTER XV.

JESUS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

MATTHEW VIII. 1-4, IX. 1-13 ; LUKE VII. 36-50, XV. 8-10.⁴

“ **B**EHOLD my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul has pleasure ! I will lay my spirit on him, and he shall proclaim righteousness to the heathen. He shall not contend nor cry out, and no one shall hear his voice in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, a

¹ Matthew xi. 27 (Luke x. 22).

² Matthew xix. 28 (Luke xxii. 30).

³ Matthew xix. 30, xx. 23 (Mark x. 31. 40).

⁴ Mark i. 40-ii. 17 ; Luke v. 12-32.

smoking flax-wick shall he not quench, . . . till he has made righteousness to triumph. And on his name shall the heathen hope." In some such words had the second Isaiah, five centuries before our era, described the servant of Yahweh, who should restore Israel and be the light of the nations;¹ and Matthew cites the words as finding their fulfilment in Jesus, especially in his unassuming manner and his scrupulous avoidance of any kind of ostentation.² In this beautiful and faithful description there is one point which marks with wonderful delicacy the conduct of Jesus to the sinners among his people. The bruised reed he does not break: when he meets the wretched and downcast, overpowered by his sense of guilt and helplessness, he does not take away his last hope of deliverance by stern rebukes and severe demands, but he devotes his whole powers to the task of raising him up again, supporting him with a gentle hand, and helping him to regain his moral strength. If the lamp-wick still smokes he quenches it not: when he meets those in whom a spark of life still glows, though the contempt of all the virtuous and pious threatens to extinguish it for ever, he does not give them over to despair and ruin by his haughty bearing, but draws them to him with a tenderness and gentle pity the like of which were never seen; cherishes the living spark, and kindles it into a steady flame.

A few of the narratives contained in our Gospels will suffice to show the simple truth of this account of Jesus; and at the same time they will illustrate the manner in which he first took up his task as the herald of the kingdom of God.

To avoid any misunderstanding, we must first explain exactly who are meant by "sinners." Nothing is more common than to say that all men are sinners; but neither could any thing be more opposed to the language of the Gospels. In them the word must always be understood as having its full and original meaning, and applying only to a special set of men. Paul was the first to apply it to all mankind before the time of Christ, and to all who had not believed in him afterwards.³ And hence arose the more general application of the term with which we are familiar. Here we may note in passing the very remarkable fact that Paul has exercised a far more powerful influence upon the doctrines and beliefs of Christians than Jesus himself. Jesus never dreamed

¹ Isaiah xlvi. 1-4. See vol. ii. chap. x. p. 417.

² Matthew xii. 17-21.

³ Romans iii. 9 ff., v. 8, 12 ff.

of putting all mankind on the same level; and he certainly drew the distinction, sanctioned by daily experience, between the good and the bad, between righteous men and sinners.¹

The word “sinners,” when used in the Gospels, refers in the first instance to a distinctly defined class of persons; those, namely, who had been expelled from the synagogue. We know that every synagogue had its ruler and its elders. These officers, in their corporate capacity, had certain powers for maintaining church discipline and pronouncing legal judgments. They sometimes inflicted corporal punishments,² and sometimes excommunicated those who had been guilty of any grievous trespass against patriotism, religion, or morality.³ Those against whom this sentence was passed were not allowed to enter the synagogue, and it is to them in the first instance that the word “sinner” is applied. “A woman who was a sinner” generally means a prostitute.

The most notorious members of the class were the “publicans,” or officials, of whatever rank, appointed by the Roman knights who were responsible for the taxes. Companies of these knights held contracts with the Roman government, generally lasting over five years, by which they engaged to pay the state a fixed sum on account of the import and export duties and other taxes of the provinces, which imposts they then levied on their own account, often stooping to the most shameful means of making their bargain profitable. Of course all their subordinates and accomplices in this system of knavery and extortion caught at a share in the proceeds. These officials, then, were regarded as thieves and robbers; and not only so, but as traitors to their country, who took sides with the Roman oppressor for the vilest purposes of selfishness and avarice. And inasmuch as it appeared to many unlawful to pay tribute to any but Israel’s true and only Lord,⁴ the publicans who collected the Roman tribute were considered impious as well as traitorous. No wonder, then, that they were despised and hated, cast out of the synagogue and denounced as infamous. Their evidence against other Jews was not accepted by the judge, their last will and testament was void, and their till was cursed so that no one might change money at it.

¹ Matthew v. 45, ix. 13; Luke vi. 32-34, xv. 7.

² Matthew x. 17, xxiii. 34; 2 Corinthians xi. 24.

³ John ix. 22, xii. 42, xvi. 2.

⁴ Matthew xxii. 15 ff. See p. 89.

Publicans and all other "sinners" were ranked with the heathen,¹ were excluded from civil and ecclesiastical communion with the Jews, and were cut off from the rights and privileges of the chosen people of the Lord. Even the richest of them were shut out from all religious and respectable circles, and were shunned as "unclean," — a fearful word at the time of Jesus, for the idea of (Levitical) "cleanness" completely dominated Jewish society. The publicans, on their side, avenged themselves by ever increasing extortion, consoled themselves with each other's society, and too often sought relief in lives of abandoned viciousness.² Many of them sank so low that at last they even despised themselves, and seemed in all eyes, even in their own, to be lost for ever.

Now these men Jesus drew to him. Nay more, he regarded it as his special mission to restore his lost and sinful countrymen. He declared expressly and repeatedly, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost;"³ his mission was in the first place directed to these "lost sheep of the house of Israel."⁴ But we must observe that this expression does not refer exclusively to the publicans and those who had been sentenced by the church. It includes all the outcasts from Jewish society, all those classes known in the Talmud as "the peoples of the land," who from ignorance or carelessness had transgressed the laws of ceremonial purity, whether by associating with heathens (who were very numerous in Galilee) or in any other way. These people had sunk below the average cultivation and (legal) piety, had perhaps seldom or never seen the glories of the temple, and had certainly never been duly instructed in the Jewish doctrines, or, if they had, had never understood them. There were among them some who were capable of better things, and who eagerly longed for salvation; but in the general opinion they were hardly, if at all, distinguished from the sinners. They were all alike unclean. The teachers of the Law never troubled themselves about them. They thought it beneath their dignity to descend to such a level, and did not even try to make them understand the Law and Prophets. Their condemnation was summed up in the words, "This people that knows not the Law is cursed!"⁵

¹ Compare Matthew v. 46, 47, with Luke vi. 32-34. See also Matthew xviii. 17, xxvi. 45; Galatians ii. 15.

² Matthew xxi. 31, 32; Luke vii. 34, xviii. 11, xix. 8. See p. 106.

³ Matthew xviii. 11; Luke xix. 10.

⁴ Matthew x. 6, xv. 24.

⁵ John vii. 49.

Such were the men to whom Jesus more especially turned. Possibly his thoughts had been directed to them even when he was still in his father's house ; for though he would not often come across them in Nazareth, since they were mostly to be found in the larger cities where the life and activity of Galilee was centred, yet his sympathy would be roused by the undisguised aversion with which he heard them mentioned, and his heart would tell him that this deep chasm, yawning between the unclean ones on the one hand and the chosen heritage of the Lord, the hallowed Israel, on the other hand must be filled up. While with John, he had been struck by the eagerness with which some of these outcasts received the preaching of the kingdom.¹ And when he himself began his work he felt impelled to rescue them, in the firm conviction that by so doing he would be removing one of the greatest obstacles to the coming of the kingdom of God. "I am come, not to call the righteous, but the sinners to enter into the kingdom of God." Though every one else gave them up, though they despaired even of themselves, yet he never despaired of them. He would raise the bruised reed, and blow upon the smoking flax-wick !

When Jesus was at Capernaum his favorite walk was by the shore of the lake. As he went out of the town in this direction he had to pass the customs-house.² And thus it happened that once, when he was returning home towards dinner-time, he saw one of the tax-gatherers sitting in front of the building, and said to him, "Come home with me !" The man whom he addressed was called Levi, son of Alphæus, and he rose at once and followed him to his house. Jesus had probably noticed before how eagerly this man had listened to his addresses and parables, though always staying at a respectful distance ; and with his fine knowledge of human nature he now read in the publican's eye the wish that he dared not utter, the wish that this invitation anticipated and satisfied. But now the ice was broken ; and when Levi lay at table with Jesus, some of his fellow tax-gatherers and other sinners came to seek the Master's society. Their courage and their trust were rewarded. Jesus applied the laws of Eastern hospitality to them too, and received them at his table. This was a decisive step that could not fail to excite both surprise and indignation. Some of the Pharisaic Scribes, too, had observed him ; and, seeing what had happened, they expressed their

¹ See pp. 107, 113, 114.

² See p. 125.

horror to his disciples : " Why, he is eating with sinners and publicans ! " But Jesus heard them and replied : " It is not the healthy but the sick that need the physician. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

We may note in passing that the first Evangelist misunderstands the words addressed by Jesus to the publican, and supposes them to be a call to the apostolic office. He therefore substitutes the name of Matthew for that of Levi, and accordingly describes Matthew as " the publican " when enumerating the Apostles.¹ It is in reality very unlikely that Levi and Matthew are the same man, or that one of the Twelve was a tax-gatherer. Luke makes another mistake, and represents the meal as taking place at the house of Levi instead of that of Jesus. It is of far more consequence, however, that we should note the style of intercourse with these people which Jesus cultivated. He invited them to come to him, for they were so much accustomed to be contemptuously repelled by every one that they would never have dared of their own accord to approach one who proclaimed himself a prophet. Unless he had been the first to stretch out his hand, no relations between himself and such people as these could ever have been established. Hardly had he made the first step, however, before numbers of them pressed to him. The most extraordinary thing of all was that he ate with them. This was trampling at once upon the customs of religion and the rules of decency ; for to join any one at table was a kind of formal avowal of friendship, and established a permanent connection between the parties.² Such an action, therefore, would by its very nature be repeated, and the fair fame of Jesus himself soon began to suffer in some quarters from his constant intercourse with such a class of men.³ And we must remember that, in thus associating with the unclean, he not only broke with all national, social, and religious prejudices, but must have encountered much in the language, the manners, and the persons of these sinners that shocked his refined perceptions. It must have required a great effort from him, as from others, not to transfer to the trespasser the great loathing which he felt for the trespass, and never to lose sight even in the sinner of the brother man whom he could respect and love. Why did he make the effort, then ? Why did he seek the society of these men and treat them as his friends ? Simply

¹ Matthew x. 3.

² Compare 1 Corinthians v. 11; Galatians ii. 12.

³ Luke vii. 34, xv. 1, 2.

because his heart impelled him to it. He felt that his first step must be to raise them up by quickening their sense of their own worth, and restoring them to self-respect. And he could only do this by showing them that he at least did not think them too bad, too hopeless, to be associated with as friends. Not that he had deliberately argued out this line of conduct, but his fine perception led him to it instinctively. Indeed, to gain any influence over such outcasts he must treat them with still more frank and cordial friendship than he displayed to others. If he had only shown them a lofty condescension he could not possibly have healed them.

And he had to heal them. He regarded and treated them as sick men. It was a characteristic saying of his, in which he defended his strange conduct, and openly declared that it was no accident that found him in such company ; that he did not intend to shun it in future, but that he bore a special commission to call the sinners into the kingdom of God, and had not come for the sake of the healthy or righteous. We must not press the saying too hard, and ask whether there is, or ever was, a man who could really be called altogether sound or righteous ; for in comparison with these sinners the portion of the people that was strictly faithful to the Lord and to his Law and temple might fairly be called devout and virtuous, and so not sick.¹

This metaphor of the physician and his patients, which Jesus applied to himself and the sinners, gave rise to many emblematic representations. Indeed, it readily lent itself to every kind of elaboration ; and we find a typical counterpart to the very story in which it is imbedded just before it. Here “the rescue of the publican” is simply altered into “the healing of the leper.” But it may be said once for all that these symbolical sketches do not refer to special definite occurrences. From the nature of the case they are generally types or specimens. And, indeed, many of the ordinary narratives of the Gospels — that of the invitation to Levi among them — must themselves be taken as mere specimens of the line of conduct or the experiences of Jesus.

But to return to the emblematic story of the leper. Once, we are told, a leper came to Jesus, bowed down in reverence to the earth, and cried, “Lord ! if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Jesus was deeply moved, stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will. Be clean !” And immediately the hideous disease left him, and he was

¹ Compare, for example, Matthew xix. 17 b-20.

clean. Upon this Jesus dismissed him, saying, "Tell it to no one, but go to Jerusalem, show yourself to the officiating priest, and make the sacrifice ordained in the Law."¹

How are we to interpret these last words? Do they mean that Jesus forbade the publican to parade the fact of his conversion, and told him if possible to restore, according to the Law,² any thing he had exacted by deceit or extortion? Or did the Evangelists add the words because they accepted the story literally? However this may be, they certainly did understand the story literally, and consequently fell into exaggerations such as that the man was "full of leprosy" (Luke); or contradictions such as that "great multitudes followed him, . . . and Jesus said, 'Tell it to no one'" (Matthew); or pointless glosses such as that "the man proclaimed it everywhere, so that all men came to Jesus, and he was obliged to withdraw into a desert place" (Matthew and Luke). But the broad lines of the original symbolic sketch may still be traced. In the first place, the special disease is carefully chosen. The sinners were as unclean, were as anxiously avoided, were considered as incurable as the lepers themselves. And again, the longing to be cleansed³ and a reverential trust in Jesus were indispensable to the salvation of these outcasts. And yet again,—most striking and important of all,—Jesus *touches* the leper. Such an unheard of, almost incredible, act is a noble symbol of the actual facts, a beautiful indication of that fine perception and delicate sympathy which made Jesus the friend of sinners, which made him seek rather than shun the friendly relations of familiar intercourse with them. So only can the lost be saved!

We will take another illustration of the friendship shown by Jesus to sinners. And here, again, we find two pictures,—one conveyed in the ordinary, and the other in the emblematic style of narrative. This time we shall let the copy precede the original.

Jesus had just returned to Capernaum after a short absence; and no sooner was it known that he was there than all the city went out to hear him, till the very door of his house was thronged all round. Then there came four men carrying a mattress, upon which lay a man struck with paralysis. He

¹ Leviticus xiii., xiv.

² Compare Luke xix. 8 with Exodus xxii. 1, 4; Numbers v. 6, 7.

³ Compare John v. 6.

wanted to come to Jesus and be healed, but it was impossible to get near him. What was to be done? They were determined not to go back disappointed; so they hoisted the bed with the sick man in it to the roof, broke up the tiles, and carefully lowered the sufferer at the very feet of Jesus. The Master was struck by such an earnest desire for help and such great confidence in his power, in a word by such faith, and said to the man, "My son, be of good cheer! Your sins are forgiven." Now there happened at the moment to be certain Scribes sitting by Jesus and conversing with him about the kingdom of God; his words shocked them greatly, and they thought "What blasphemy! Who can forgive sins except God alone?" But Jesus saw what they felt, and said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'? That you may know then that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins"—here he turned suddenly to the sick man—"Stand up, take up your bed and return to your home!" And, behold! the man stood up, and went home in the sight of them all; and they were all amazed and praised God, saying, "We have never seen the like."

We have given this story in its fullest form, as it appears in Mark and Luke. The symbolical interpretation is demanded by the existence of a corresponding narrative in the fourth Gospel,¹ by details in the picture which do not admit of a literal interpretation, and, above all, by the fact that if interpreted literally it exhibits an inexplicable confusion of spiritual and material elements. What would be the sense of trying to cheer the sick man by promising that, on the strength of his great desire to be cured of paralysis, his sins should be forgiven? Again, the question addressed to the Scribes appears to compare two things together which are absolutely incapable of comparison, inasmuch as they have nothing whatever to do with each other; namely, *peace with God*, and *the use of one's limbs*. Nor did it by any means follow that one who could restore a sick man to health had an undeniable right to assure him that his sins were forgiven, for a miracle might be equally well ascribed to divine or diabolic agencies;² and the question, "Is it easier to restore peace to a man's soul or health to his body?" admits of a very different answer from that which the context indicates as the only possible one. On the other hand, every thing fits into its

¹ John v. 1-15.

² Matthew xii. 24, xxiv. 24; Deuteronomy xiii. 1, 2.

place, and the whole narrative flows smoothly, if we bear in mind that the disease really meant is moral paralysis, the incapacity for good which evil habits have produced. The perception of the sufferer's passionate longing to be restored enabled Jesus to assure him that the sinful past was washed away ; the devout bystanders were indignant at the restoration to honor of such a notorious sinner, and the story teaches the great truths that moral renovation is impossible unless preceded by forgiveness, and that he who has the power to bring a sinner back and make him tread the path of God's commandments has, indeed, the right to tell him that his sins have been forgiven. If this is what the story represents, the bystanders had good cause indeed to "glorify God." The narrative, then, might have been headed, "Moral Paralysis Cured by Jesus!" and the emphasis falls not only upon the connection between forgiveness and restoration, but still more upon the difficulties which the sinner braved to come to Jesus, upon the faith to which his conduct testified, upon the indignation raised in the minds of the religious teachers by what Jesus did, and upon his own defence of it.

We will now give the original of which this is a copy, and it will hardly be necessary to point out the similarity of the two. It runs as follows :—

A pious man of the school of the Pharisees, whose name was Simon, had asked Jesus to dine with him. When he came at the usual hour he was received without much distinction, and took his place among the other guests, who were of the same school as the host himself. But the meal had hardly begun before it was interrupted. The door was left open in accordance with the usages of Eastern hospitality ; for some one might come in, as often happened, in the course of the meal, perhaps to listen to the conversation. Now, through this open door there came a woman, which was strange enough in itself, for none but men were present. Simon looked at her with amazement. What! Could he believe his eyes? Was it that miserable and abandoned creature? Dare *she* pollute his threshold? Yes, it was she, — "a woman who was a sinner." How came she there? She had heard Jesus, and a change had taken place in her heart. His presence and his preaching had completely overpowered her. She had happened to hear where he was being entertained, and she must and would follow him and do him homage. She left her house with an alabaster flask of ointment in her hand, and at the risk of being driven from the door like a dog by the master

of the house, she went in quest of Jesus. She approached the place where he lay, leaning on his left arm, after the custom of the time, with his face to the table, his body resting on a cushion, and his naked feet stretched backwards. There she bowed down her head and burst into tears as she kissed his feet in sign of deepest reverence, and bathed them in a flood of tears. Presently she recovered herself, and dried the feet, which she never ceased to kiss, with the luxuriant hair that hung loosely down her shoulders ; and, remembering the purpose for which she came, poured over them the precious contents of the flask she had brought with her.

Meanwhile, the host could hardly contain his horror and contempt. Amazement and indignation had at first deprived him of utterance, and then he had kept quiet to see what would happen and what Jesus would do. He had seen enough now ! “ What ! ” thought he, “ will he let *her* kiss his feet, dry them, and anoint them ? How loathsome is the thought ! Let who will hold him for prophet, I know he is none. For were he a prophet he would know who and what that creature is, and before he let her pollute him with her touch he would shake her off, and hurl the curse of the Lord upon her ! ” Did Jesus see the contemptuous curl of Simon’s lip ? Did he read in his face the sense of loathing that filled him ? At any rate he broke the painful silence with the words : “ Simon ! I should like to ask you something.” “ Speak on, Rabbi ! ” answered Simon coldly. “ A certain money-lender,” continued Jesus, “ had two debtors, one of whom owed him five hundred denarii (say £20), and the other fifty (£2). But when the debts fell due, and neither of the debtors could pay, he generously forgave them both. Which of the two do you suppose would love his benefactor most ? ” “ A childish question,” Simon may have thought ; but all he said was, “ I suppose the man to whom he had remitted most.” “ Yes,” said Jesus. Then he turned his head, and stretched out his hand towards the woman, whom he had left so far as though he had not noticed what she was doing, for he felt that this was the truest kindness to her. “ Simon,” he cried, “ do you see this woman ? You think her still bowed down by the great guilt of many unpardonable sins. But consider. I came into your house. You did not so much as offer me water to wash my feet when I had put off my sandals, but this woman has wet my feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but since she came in she has never ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she

has anointed my feet with ointment. Has she not shown the fervor of her love? I tell you, then, her many sins are forgiven her. Her own conduct proves it. But," he continued in a quiet tone, wishing to give his host to understand what heavy witness his haughty conduct bore against him, "he to whom little is forgiven shows but little love." Meanwhile, the woman knew not whether she was dreaming or waking, and could scarce believe that he was really speaking about her. But now he turned to her and said, "Your sins are forgiven!" A scarcely audible murmur ran through the place, for the guests had been deeply shocked already by the fact of Jesus allowing the woman to touch him, and still more by his daring to make a kind of comparison between such a creature and a man of approved piety and virtue like their host; but now they exchanged indignant glances, and their looks betrayed the thought: "What does he suppose he is? What right has he to forgive her sins?" But Jesus, taking no notice of the protest they implied, said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace!" and so, with a look of encouragement and sympathy, he sent her on her way.

The tradition of the Church has, without any reason, identified this woman, of whom we know nothing more, with Mary of Magdala, who has thus become the express image or type of penitence. It is a matter of more importance to decide how far we may rely upon the truth of this story, which is one of the most beautiful in all the Gospels. It bears upon its face unmistakable signs of truth, not only in its indications of the characters and actions of all concerned, but still more in the depth and refinement of the spiritual truth contained in the words of Jesus on the connection between forgiveness and love.¹ Yet we cannot doubt that certain unessential details, such as the alabaster flask of ointment and the name of the host, have slipped in from some other source; for we read elsewhere of a certain woman, otherwise unknown to us, anointing Jesus in the house of a man named Simon;² and it is evident from the context that at that time no such mark of honor had ever been paid to him before. It is clear, therefore, that the account of the event just given was affected by this later incident, and that it is no longer possible to say exactly what took place in fact. It is inevitable that oral tradition should sometimes run stories into one another. But this does not at all affect the only point of real importance.

¹ Luke vii. 41, 42, 47, 48.

² Matthew xxvi. 6-13 (Mark xiv. 3-9); compare John xii. 1-8.

Whatever did or did not happen on this occasion the essential truth of the picture cannot be doubted. It reproduces with striking fidelity the attitude which Jesus took towards sinners.

As we go along we shall meet from time to time with further illustrations of this subject. Thus, in discussing the relations of Jesus to the Pharisees, we shall see that the latter accused him of too great freedom in his intercourse with sinners; on his journey to Jerusalem we shall find him described both emblematically and literally as the friend of publicans; and finally, during his stay in Jerusalem, the story of an adulteress who was brought before him will claim our attention.

At present we will only give a few more examples of the way in which tradition worked out the metaphor by which Jesus compared himself to a physician of the sick. The first of these examples is given in all three Gospels. We shall put the later additions between brackets, to mark them off from the older and simpler form of the story:—

A certain woman who had suffered for twelve years from a disease that made her unclean according to the Law [and had never been able to obtain relief, though she had spent her substance in the attempt], came behind Jesus in the middle of a crowd, and seized hold of the fringe of his garment; “for,” said she to herself, “if only I can touch his garment, I shall be saved.” [Now a healing power did indeed go out from Jesus to the woman, but not without his perceiving it.] Then Jesus turned round and [asked who had touched him. His disciples, who only noticed the multitude that pressed upon him, and not the poor woman who had come to him for help, attempted in vain to persuade him that it was an idle question. At last the woman herself came forward trembling, threw herself upon the ground before him, and in the presence of the people declared what she had done. Then Jesus] cheered her with the words, “Daughter, your faith has saved you, go in peace!”¹

The following stories are each of them found in one Gospel only:—

Two blind men once followed Jesus in the street and cried, “Son of David, have pity on us!” He went into his house, and they followed him. At last he turned round to them and said earnestly, “Do you really believe that I can

¹ Matthew ix. 20-22 (Mark v. 25-34; Luke viii. 43-48).

help you?" "Yes, Lord!" they answered, unhesitatingly. Then he laid his hand upon their eyes, and said, "Let it be to you according to your faith;" and immediately their sight was restored. He strictly forbade them to tell it to any one, but in vain.¹

Another time, when he was on a journey, they brought him a deaf man who had also a great impediment in his speech, and besought him to lay his hands on him and cure him. He took the unfortunate man aside, put a finger in each of his ears, made spittle, and moistened his tongue with it. Then he looked up, heaved a deep sigh, and said in a commanding voice, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" And thereupon his ears were opened, and the impediment in his speech was gone, so that he could hear and speak as well as others. Again Jesus forbade the man himself and those who had brought him to publish the event abroad, but they did it all the more, and every one cried out in amazement, "Truly, this Jesus fulfils his calling according to the Scripture, for he makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak!"²

Yet again: A blind man was brought to Jesus at Bethsaida, in the North, with the humble petition that he would touch him. He took the blind man from his guide and led him outside the village. Then he made him stand still, spit on his eyes, put his hand over them, and when he had removed it asked him, "Do you see any thing?" The blind man stared and answered, "I can see people; but confusedly, like trees walking." Jesus put his hand upon his eyes again, and when he removed it his sight was completely restored, both for near and distant objects. So the man was able to go home alone, but Jesus told him not to go through Bethsaida.³

The Evangelists have taken all these stories literally, and have therefore added many details, especially in the last two, which are beside the real purpose of the narratives. But the essential feature common to them all is that Jesus touches the sufferers, or lays his hand upon them; and this means that he rescued them by frankly entering into friendly intercourse with them. For there cannot be a doubt that these stories, as well as the more general accounts of how Jesus restored the use of lost powers or withered limbs to the crippled, the blind, the dumb, and the maimed,⁴ were originally symbolical rather than literal in their meaning. They represent

¹ Matthew ix. 27-31.

² Mark viii. 22-26.

³ Mark vii. 31-37.

⁴ Matthew xv. 29-31.

Jesus—the friend of sinners, the redeemer of the “peoples of the land”—as restoring to the spiritually blind the perception of the way of truth and the path of salvation; giving the morally crippled power to walk after God’s commandments; teaching the deaf to hear his voice, his word of love, the dumb to speak his praise; making the lepers clean, and restoring the dead to life,—and so fulfilling the scriptural anticipations of the blessings of the Messianic age,¹ in which he himself saw his mission indicated.²

When Jesus speaks of sinners as “the sick,” he describes by implication his whole method of dealing with them. He never denounces them, or threatens them with the wrath of God, or utters the stern sentence of a judge against them. It is pity that inspires him. And again, it is not the lofty pity that looks down upon the sufferers from on high, but the pity that is linked to unbounded reverence for the *man* never lost in the *sinner*; the pity that goes out to meet the sufferers with tenderest sympathy, and gives itself up to them without reserve. Jesus had found the key to the sinner’s heart by that love of man which was one with belief in the worth of man. From this point of view, perhaps the story of the repentant “woman who was a sinner” is the most striking of all. Jesus did not say to her, “Sin no more!” for to continue in her evil ways would be impossible to her, and such an exhortation would have implied a cruel doubt, which Jesus would not injure her by entertaining. What he says about her is so clear and so profound that it not only gives us fresh insight into the workings of the human soul, but helps us to perceive how we ourselves stand with regard to our own past and God. Love is the only and the certain proof that our sins are forgiven.

Jesus himself expressed his faith in the worth of man and the love of God in a simple image, with which we may close our sketch of the sinner’s friend:—

If a woman has ten drachmas and misses one as she is counting them over, does she not light her lamp and sweep the dust out of the cracks and corners, and move about the furniture and look under the settle, and go on searching carefully and unweariedly until she finds it? And when she finds the coin, does she not run out and call her friends and neighbors, and say, “Wish me joy! for I had lost a drachma, but now I have found it again!” And so, I tell you, there is joy among God’s angels when a sinner repents.

¹ Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6; compare xxix. 18, 19, xlii. 7, lxi. 1.

² Matthew xi. 5; compare Luke iv. 18–21.

CHAPTER XVI.

JESUS AND THE RELIGION OF HIS PEOPLE.

MARK II. 18-III. 6.¹

ONE of the most important and interesting questions we can ask about Jesus refers to the attitude he took towards the religion of Israel ; and we must therefore try to form a true idea of the extent to which he accepted the existing system, and the point at which his principles compelled him to depart from it, and so produced a religious revolution. The importance and the difficulty of the question will be readily understood when we reflect that it is, as it were, the focus of three apparent contradictions, which will force themselves upon us in succession as we continue our treatment of the narratives of the New Testament. Firstly : Jesus was put to death as a heretic ; but his faithful disciples and friends were afterwards left undisturbed as orthodox Jews. Secondly : Our Gospels record sayings and actions of Jesus which are in conflict with the Law ; but Paul, whose hands it would have strengthened infinitely to have been able to quote them, appears to know nothing of them. Lastly and chiefly : Nothing was further from the thoughts of Jesus, from first to last, than the foundation of a new religion ; which, nevertheless, turned out to be a prominent result of his life and work. It is obvious that all this must be largely explained by the peculiar attitude he assumed towards the religion of his people.

The passages which bear upon this subject are very numerous, but at present we shall only deal with such as are absolutely necessary to throw sufficient light upon the question we have asked, and such as will not demand special treatment in any other connection. Presently, when the threatening clouds begin to gather, when Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, when the final conflict deepens in the city itself, we shall constantly meet with examples to confirm our present conclusion.

In the first place, then, we must remember that the religious education that Jesus received in his father's house and in the synagogue must have disposed him reverently to observe the precepts of the Law, as well as the tradition which was

¹ Matthew ix. 14-17, xii. 1-14; Luke v. 33-vi. 11.

regarded of equal authority, so long as they were not offensive or injurious to his moral sense. We must observe, also, that his own teaching was entirely free from doctrinal tendencies. If we put these two facts together, we shall conclude that the first collision between Jesus and the popular religion would be in no way of his own seeking, but would be provoked without any direct intention on his part by the line of conduct he pursued ; and again, that he would never express an opinion about the Law and the tradition unless he had special occasion to do so, which would generally be when he was expressly challenged to declare his opinions. Now, among other matters, he was questioned or attacked in this way on the subjects of fasting and the observation of the Sabbath.

The fact that he prescribed no fasts to his disciples could not fail in the long run to attract attention. The great day of atonement and the other general fasts were held binding on every Jew, and were doubtless observed by Jesus and his associates ; but it had become the established custom for every one who laid claim to a religious character to observe extra fasts from time to time. To do so was considered a sign of earnestness and a proof of piety. The strict Pharisees chose for this purpose Thursday, the day on which Moses was supposed to have ascended Sinai, and Monday, the day on which he came down. John had been very exacting in this respect ; and his followers continued faithfully to observe his injunctions as an act of penance on behalf of their people, in view of the great judgment to come. They, above all others, must have noticed with surprise that he who had taken up the work of John had adopted such a different course. On a certain day, accordingly, they came to him and asked, “ Why do we and the Pharisees constantly fast, but your disciples not ? ” In his answer Jesus gave them clearly to understand that, so far from attaching the smallest value to fasting in itself, he condemned it as an unnatural constraint whenever it was practised as a religious duty, as a meritorious deed, by those who were not spontaneously inclined to observe it. “ Can the wedding guests mourn,” he said, “ while the bridegroom is with them ? ” The bridegroom’s friends would never think of mourning during the seven days of the wedding feast, and no more would his disciples so long as they could rejoice in his presence. “ But the days will come,” he added, “ when the bridegroom has been taken away from them, and then they will fast.” The wedding is a type

of the Messianic kingdom ; and if Jesus compared himself to the bridegroom and referred to his separation from his disciples, apparently by death, it must have been at a late period in his public life. It is possible, however, that the words have been slightly altered to suit the event ; and that originally the stress fell upon the difference between the disciples of John, who had lost their master, and his own disciples, who rejoiced in the presence of theirs. But this is unimportant. The gist of the whole thing is that Jesus only sanctioned fasting when it was the natural expression of the sorrow of the heart. This principle not only changes the whole aspect of the special observance in dispute, but deprives all religious observances whatever of their meritorious character. We must observe them if the needs of our own hearts urge us to do so, but not otherwise.

Jesus well knew that he had enunciated quite a new principle. He knew that it was impossible for any one who was still a slave to the old conception of the religious life to accept it. "No one would take a scrap of a new and unshrunk piece of cloth to mend an old garment with. For if he did, then, as soon as the new patch got wet and shrunk, it would draw up the old cloth and make a worse rent than ever." No more can we force those who have accepted new principles to adhere strictly to old forms. "Nor do we put new wine that is still fermenting into old skins that have lost their elasticity and toughness. For if we did, then, as the camels carried the wine-skins on their backs, and the sun shone upon them, the wine would begin to work and the skins would burst. Then the wine would flow away, and the skins would be spoiled. But we put new wine into new skins, and both are preserved."

Jesus expresses himself as clearly and strongly as possible, though he makes use of figurative language. He draws a sharp contrast between old and new, and definitely declares that the two cannot be combined, and that every attempt to unite them is not only futile but destructive to them both. He demands emphatically that form and spirit shall be brought into perfect harmony. The third Evangelist, to whom this passage must have been specially acceptable, adds (skilfully enough though without authority) several details of his own. In the first place, he makes the question addressed to Jesus include a reference to the long and numerous prayers which the disciples of John and the Pharisees were commanded to repeat, and to which exactly the same principles would

apply. Then he observes that if a man took a piece of a new garment to mend an old one, not only would the effect on the old one be incongruous, but it would be a great pity to spoil the new one. Finally, he concludes with the words, “And no one who has been drinking the old and mellowed wine desires the hot, new wine; for he says, ‘The old is good!’” This remark shows profound knowledge of human nature; and as an apology for those who are attached to the old order of things it is equally humorous in form and kindly in spirit. Perhaps the words were never uttered by Jesus; but they certainly breathe his spirit, and are quite worthy of him.

Here Mark and Luke neglect the order of time in favor of similarity of subject, and add at once an account of a two-fold violation of the Sabbath by Jesus. Soon after the Passover, as the ripe corn stood in the fields, Jesus and the Twelve were on their way to a neighboring village. The path led across some fields, but at a certain point the way was barred by some tangled ears of corn that lay across the path. Without much thinking what they were doing the disciples began to pull up some of the ears and clear the path. But certain Pharisees observed it, and at once turned to Jesus, whom they held responsible for it, saying, “What does this mean? They are doing an unlawful deed, and on the Sabbath too!” Jesus met them at once. He might have simply replied, “Necessity has no law;” but he preferred to silence his critics once for all by following the recognized style of argument of those days, and clothing his reply in the form of an appeal to a scriptural precedent: “Have you never read in the Scripture what David did in his necessity? How, when Abiathar was high priest, he took the shew-bread to satisfy his hunger and that of his companions, though it was not lawful for any one to eat it but the priests?” We may remark, in passing, that here the Evangelist or Jesus himself makes a slight mistake; for it was not Abiathar but his father Ahimelech who was chief priest when the event referred to took place, and David had no one with him at the time.¹ But Jesus went farther. After fully exculpating his disciples, he went on boldly to lay down the rule, “The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath day.”

We must remember with what scrupulous care the stricter

¹ 1 Samuel xxi. 1-6; compare vol. i. pp. 513, 516.

Jews observed the Sabbath ; how, for instance, they long abstained from even defending themselves in time of war on this day ; and how they determined, with ludicrous minuteness, the exact extent and nature of the actions that might and might not be performed on the Sabbath. When we think of all this, we shall plainly see that Jesus was putting himself into direct opposition to the religion of his people, and even to the fourth commandment, when he announced the principle that the Sabbath was meant to serve man, not man the Sabbath ; that the commandment must not be made a burden, but in case of need or in the cause of duty might and must be neglected. It is true that one of the later Jewish Scribes uttered a saying that closely resembles that of Jesus : “The Sabbath is given to you, and you are by no means given to the Sabbath.” This was not the current Jewish doctrine, however, but a very remarkable exception to the general rule. Moreover, Jesus not only declared the principle, but unhesitatingly put it into practice.

So Jesus took the same view of the Sabbath as he did of fasts, and was equally bold in carrying out his views in either case. To observe the Sabbath was in itself of no consequence whatever. If it helped a man to reach his true destiny, let him abide by it ; if not, he was at liberty to neglect it.

According to Matthew and Luke, the disciples were not clearing the pathway, but plucking the ears and rubbing out the grains to eat because they were hungry. Matthew makes Jesus appeal, in defence of his disciples, not only to the example of David, but to the practice of the priests, who desecrated every Sabbath by offering the sacrifices ordained for the day,¹ and yet were guiltless. In like manner Hillel, the most renowned of all the Jewish theologians, who had now been dead some thirty years, had maintained the people’s right to slaughter the paschal lamb even when the eve of the Passover fell on the Sabbath ; and it is not impossible that Jesus may have borrowed this argument from him. But whereas Hillel’s purpose was to defend the priestly prerogative of the whole people, which was quite in the spirit of the Pharisees, Jesus gives the argument quite another turn by adding, “If the priests, as servants of the temple, are above the commandment, there is more than the temple here.” He did not mean so much that he was personally of more importance than the temple, as that his own vocation and that of his disciples — their work for the kingdom of God — was

¹ Numbers xxviii. 9, 10.

more than the temple. But most likely these words were uttered on some other occasion.

There was no lack of such occasions, for several attacks were made upon Jesus with special reference to the observance of the Sabbath. He would not pause on the day of rest in his efforts to save sinners. To do so would, in his opinion, have been equivalent to hurling them to destruction; for he felt that to leave a good deed undone was as bad as to do a man a direct injury. This idea is expressed in immediate connection with the preceding narrative in the following emblematic form: —

Once, on a Sabbath day, Jesus entered a synagogue. There was a man present who had a shrunken hand. The “Gospel of the Hebrews” — which, like our three Gospels, understands the story literally — says that this man was a stonemason, and that he besought Jesus to heal him, and so save him from beggary. Ancient and modern commentators, on the other hand, have explained the story to mean that before the coming of Jesus the hand of the pious Jew was made powerless by the Law to do the works of God. But let us hear the story out! The Pharisees, in their anxious dread of trespasses against the Law, watched Jesus to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath. They must have known already that he was not “sound” upon this point, and if he now committed an act of inexcusable desecration they would accuse him before the council of the elders. But Jesus saw through their intent. “Go and stand in the middle of the synagogue,” he said to the sufferer. Then he asked those present, and especially the guardians of the Law, “What may we do on the Sabbath? — good, or evil? — save a soul, or kill it?” There was deep silence. Jesus cast a glance of mingled wrath and sadness upon those in whom prejudice had so darkened and obscured the natural sense of right and wrong, and then turning to the man, who was still standing in the midst of the assembly, he cried, “Stretch out your hand!” and immediately it was restored, and was as strong and supple as the other. Doubly embittered by their own inability to answer the question Jesus had put to them, the Pharisees went out to take counsel how best to inflict upon the Sabbath-breaker the punishment he had incurred.¹

According to Matthew, Jesus said on this occasion, “Suppose one of you had a single sheep and it fell into a hole on

¹ Numbers xv. 32-36.

the Sabbath, would he not lay hold of it and lift it out? And how much more is a man worth than a sheep!" It seems that Jesus used this argument, as altogether conclusive, on several occasions when justifying his conduct and endeavoring to bring his critics to better thoughts. At any rate we find it again in two other stories. The first refers to the cure on the Sabbath of one who was suffering from dropsy. The legalists and Pharisees were observing Jesus, and purposely declined to answer his question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" Then Jesus cured the sick man and sent him home, and turning upon his would-be accusers asked, "Suppose the son or even the ox of one of you had fallen into a well on the Sabbath, would he not at once draw him out?" But they had no reply.¹ Again: Once he was teaching in a synagogue when a woman appeared who had been afflicted for eighteen years by a demon that paralyzed her muscles. She was bent almost double, and could not stand upright. With deep compassion Jesus cried to her, "Woman! you are released from your affliction!" and as he laid his hand upon her she immediately became upright, and offered fervent thanks to God. But the ruler of the synagogue was shocked by this desecration of the Sabbath, and yet was afraid openly to rebuke the Master to his face. So he turned to the people and said sharply, "There are six working days! If any one wishes to be healed let him come upon one of them, and let the Sabbath be kept holy!" But Jesus would not accept this indirect rebuke. "You hypocrites!" he cried, in all the force of his righteous indignation, "does not each one of you loose his ox or ass from the crib and water him at the trough or fountain on the Sabbath day? And shall not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, be loosed on the Sabbath day?" Thus his opponents were put to shame, and the people rejoiced in his glorious deeds.²

If, as the Evangelists suppose, the question had really been one of healing bodily infirmities, we might reasonably question the weight of the argument, for the delay need only have been for a single day. But for moral diseases, where any delay may be fatal, the argument holds good. It matters little for our purpose whether the last two pictures represent the rescue of the heathen and the Jews respectively, or whether they simply refer in general to the work of Jesus in saving the lost. In either case the historical element in them is

¹ Luke xiv. 1-6; after an amended version.

² Luke xiii. 10-17.

simply this, that it was his uniform principle to postpone the observance of external religious ceremonies to the claims of humanity. He himself expressed the principle in a saying taken from Hosea,¹ “God asks for mercy and not sacrifice.” This quotation is put into his mouth more than once, and it is probable that he often told those who found fault with him to ponder over the meaning of that saying of the prophet which they had never yet fully understood. Matthew introduces it once in the account of Jesus’ invitation to the publican, and once in the story of the plucking the ears of corn, but in neither case has he placed it rightly. There are other genuine sayings floating about in the Gospels out of their true connection.

For the sake of completeness we may mention here that the freedom with which Jesus treated the observance of the Sabbath, and the conflicts in which this freedom involved him, were so uniformly and firmly established in the tradition, that even the spiritualized narratives of the fourth Gospel make him perform miracles of healing on the Sabbath.² Again, the following passage is preserved in an ancient manuscript of the New Testament:³ “On the same day [on which his disciples plucked the ears of corn] he saw a man working on the Sabbath day, and said to him, ‘Man! if you know what you are doing you are blessed; but if not, then you are accursed and a transgressor of the Law.’” We cannot accept this saying as authentic, for Jesus would never have praised any one simply for neglecting the day of rest, even from the ripest conviction, unless at the call of duty. He kept faithfully to his own rule: “The Sabbath is made for man, is made for me;” and so he *used* the day, and regularly visited the synagogue, for instance, at first for his own religious education, and then for that of others. He would certainly never have given needless cause of offence.

Finally, he took the same position with regard to sacrifices as he did to fasting and the observance of the Sabbath. On this subject, however, he seldom had to express an opinion, since Galilee was so far removed from the temple and its rites. And even when he referred to the subject, during his stay at Jerusalem, it was only indirectly, and for the sake of illustrating a moral duty: “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has any thing against you, leave your gift before the altar. Haste away and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your

¹ Hosea vi. 6.

² John v. 1-17, ix.

³ After Luke vi. 4.

gift.”¹ If we remember that although the Scribe and the synagogue were already beginning to overshadow the priest and the temple, yet the offering of sacrifice was still considered the one pre-eminent act of religion, we shall understand that it must have sounded highly irreverent and irreligious to suggest and even recommend that a man who was on the point of performing it should break off so abruptly. But Jesus was far from wishing to prohibit or dissuade his disciples from offering sacrifice. The later Ebionites misunderstood his meaning when they put the words into his mouth, “I am come to make an end of sacrifices; for until you cease to sacrifice, God’s wrath will not cease to be upon you!” But he made the law of sacrifice absolutely subordinate to the demands of the moral law, which demanded that quarrels should be reconciled and compensation given for injuries inflicted. When sacrifices interfered with the fulfilment of sacred duties, such as those of a child to his parents, then, and then only, he utterly condemned them.² What he said about the payment of tithes, even when performed with the most scrupulous minuteness, applied equally to sacrifices: “Be not neglectful of these things; but remember that justice, mercy, and fidelity are the duties that come first.”³ In all this Jesus was thoroughly consistent.



CHAPTER XVII.

JESUS AND THE RELIGION OF HIS PEOPLE.

(Continued.)

MATTHEW VII. 12, VI. 1-6, 16-18, V. 20-22, 27, 28, 33-48, 17.⁴

THE Talmud tells us a beautiful story about Hillel. A certain heathen, who probably wished to throw ridicule upon the numerous religious institutions and practices of the Jews, as consorting oddly with their doctrine of the unity of God, had gone to Shammai, the head of the opposite school to Hillel’s, and told him that he wished to become a Jew and desired to receive instruction from him, but only on condition that the whole religious doctrine of the Jews should be im-

Matthew v. 23, 24.

Matthew xxiii. 23; compare Michah vi. 8.

² Matthew xv. 3-6.

⁴ Luke vi. 27-36.

parted to him while he could stand upon one leg! Shammai chased him from his door indignantly. The heathen was well enough pleased by this result, and went on to Hillel, expecting to make fun of him in the same way. "Good, my son!" answered the Rabbi gently, "make ready and attend. 'Do not to others what you would not have them do to you.' This is the substance of the Law; the rest is only its application."

In this golden saying Jesus must have found delight and satisfaction when first he heard it, and accordingly he adopted and promulgated it in a better form himself: "Do to others what you would have them do to you; for this is the Law and the Prophets." Thus boldly did he reduce the practice of religion to a single, all-embracing, moral principle. This uncompromising spirit was characteristic of Jesus; for though we have seen again and again¹ that in dealing with the religion of his people he kept clear of doctrinal questions with singular tact, and confined himself to the sphere of morals; though we shall presently see that even when he attacked any religious prejudice that was hurtful to the love of man, he substituted nothing but an emphatic warning,²—yet in spite of all his caution and moderation he would submit to no restraints whatever in upholding the sanctity of the moral law.

We may naturally ask whether the agreement between Jesus and Hillel extends much beyond the form of words they used. The question is answered by the fact that the great theologian owed much of his fame to his various methods of interpretation; that is to say, to the many artifices which he reduced to a system for twisting the Scripture into harmony with the wants of the age. This shows us at once that the distinction between Jesus and Hillel did not lie simply in the difference between a command and a prohibition, but that Jesus unhesitatingly put into practice what the other treated as an abstract principle.

It is also worth noticing that Jesus makes a very significant addition to the saying of Hillel in the words, "and the Prophets." *The Law and the Prophets* is generally a comprehensive formula for the Jewish religion or the Old Covenant;³ but in the mouth of Jesus⁴ it means the Jewish religion laid down in the Mosaic law as conceived, interpreted, and applied

¹ Compare pp. 148, 176, 179.

² Luke xiii. 1-5.

³ Luke xvi. 16, 29, 31, xxiv. 27, 44, *et seq.*

⁴ Matthew vii. 12, xxii. 40; compare v. 17.

by the prophets. Now the prophets, as we all know, emphatically declared that the demands of the moral law were of infinitely more importance than the external ordinances of religion, and even condemned the observance of the latter with the utmost severity in cases where the former were neglected.¹ In doing so they were, as a matter of fact, simply contending against the abuse of priestly authority and the precepts of a floating oral tradition; for at that time (the eighth or seventh centuries B.C.) most of the laws now contained in the Pentateuch were still unwritten, and were not clothed with divine authority. But neither Jesus nor any of his contemporaries had the least idea of this. They never doubted for a moment that Moses was really the author of the five books of the Law; and, consequently, Jesus must have thought that all these passionate exclamations of the prophets were made with direct reference to the written revelation,—to the divine Law itself. So he fortified himself in his own mind, and still more in his controversies with others, by the example of his great predecessors,—those champions inspired by God. Like them he considered all external observances insignificant in comparison with a virtuous life; like them he maintained the unconditional supremacy of the claims of morality, and therefore the freedom of the individual with regard to all religious usages. The demands of morality were afterwards spoken of by Paul² as “the law written in the heart;” and Jesus, too, regarded them as the original, unalterable, and supreme commandments of God. All outward ordinances were not only subordinate to these moral laws, but were in many cases mere perversions of the truth or concessions to human weakness.³ From the prophets Jesus had first learned independent courage; and in them he recognized to the last spirits akin to his own. From their armory he drew the weapons for his strife; and though he attacked the traditional piety of his own times with severity and directness, he never for a moment doubted that he was true to Israel’s religion, for he took his stand upon the teaching of the prophets.⁴ “Mercy and not sacrifice! Justice, love, and truth are more than all the observances of worship; for these latter are, after all, mere human ordinances!”

¹ For example 1 Samuel xv. 22; Isaiah i. 11-17; Jeremiah vii. 21-23; Amos v. 21-24.

² Romans ii. 15.

³ Matthew xv. 3, 4, 9, 11, xix. 4, 6-9, 17, 21, xxiii. 23; Mark ii. 27.

⁴ Hosea vi. 6; Michah vi. 8; Isaiah xxix. 13.

He had need of such support, for his opinions were in direct conflict with the theory and practice of Israel's recognized leaders, and he never spared his opponents. Listen how he chastised them : —

“ Beware of doing your religious duties before the eyes of men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your heavenly Father.

“ When you give to the poor, make no flourish of trumpets over it, as the hypocrites do, for they display their deeds of charity in the public streets, and jingle their contributions in the synagogues, to gain the praise of men. I tell you they have received their reward already. But when you give to the poor, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your deeds of kindness may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“ And when you pray, be not like the hypocrites who delight to stand and pray in the synagogues, or at the corners of the streets, that they may be sure to be seen. I tell you they have received their reward already. But when you pray, go into your inner chamber, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret ; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“ And when you wish to fast, never put on a dismal countenance as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces that every one may know they are fasting. I tell you they have received their reward already. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, as if for a festival, that no one may know you are fasting save your Father who is in secret ; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

With what a masterly hand he throws off, in a few rapid touches, these brief but living portraiture ! A holy satire on every school or fashion that makes religion a coat to put off and on, a part to study, a thing of outward show ! Can we not see that friend of the poor who is so proud of his charitable disposition, but prouder still of his reputation for it ? Can we not see the punctual devotee who goes to the synagogue every day to say his prayers, but is not displeased should the hour sometimes overtake him in the street, especially at a much-frequented spot ? — then he stops short and offers up his long petition where he stands, while the passers-by turn aside in reverence and lower their voices to a whisper ! Can we not see that saintly ascetic, with his head bowed down and strewed with ashes, with his unkempt hair and beard and his penitential garb ? The people point to him in won-

der and say, "Fasting again! What a man he is! He never spares himself!" But we must not suppose that in these sketches Jesus was publicly exposing a set of impostors. In the first place, he was not addressing the people at all. These pictures, from their very nature, were suited not for a public discourse, but for the instruction of a smaller circle of disciples. But, again, these "hypocrites" were not conscious and deliberate impostors, who assumed the mask of religion simply to conceal their sins behind it, or who made a great public display of piety that they might give the rein to their evil passions in private. Nor when he warns his disciples, with great emphasis, on another occasion, against "the leaven of the Pharisees," and Luke adds "that is hypocrisy,"¹ must we suppose that these men were hypocrites in the proper sense of the word. They did not try to deceive others, but they actually deceived themselves; and their self-deception was as complete as it was common. They genuinely believed themselves to be earnest, good, religious people, and they really lacked nothing—but the true principle of piety! Nor had Jesus had any thing to say against their "righteousness" or good works in themselves. He neither rejected nor overturned any thing. Generous almsgiving, regular devotions, voluntary fasts, and all other religious observances met with his approval, "if only," as he said to his disciples, "vanity and self-satisfaction, the applause of men or self-applause, do not become, perhaps without your knowing it, the motives of your actions. If they do, you will surely miss the reward which God lays up for the truly pious in return for every good work,—the reward which he will give them when the Messianic judgment is held and the kingdom of God established. Then say not, even to yourselves, how much you have given to the poor; let your prayers be a secret between yourselves and God, and be content, if need be, to pass for a worldling among men rather than hunt for their applause. Religious forms are only good when they express a genuine longing of the heart, and bear the stamp of truth and Nature."

But we can easily see that the direction given by the Law to the piety of Israel would naturally tend to the complete resolution of religion into outward forms. It was enough to obey the precepts of the Law and the tradition, without questioning the heart. Jesus, then, was attacking the very essence of the piety of his day, not one of its degenerate

¹ Luke xii. 1.

manifestations ; he was laying his axe to its root, not lopping off a sickly branch ! No doubt there are still thousands of Christians whose religion, without their being at all aware of it, is a mere matter of display ; who pride themselves on their own good deeds, and whose contributions to benevolent objects are speculations made by vanity in the market of applause. But their want of true sincerity is at variance with the religion they profess ; whereas the Jews of the time of Jesus were mere formalists, just because they were so submissive to the Law.

Jesus was not thinking of the number but of the nature of good works,—not of religious observances themselves, but of the principle that ought to underlie them,—when he said to his followers, “I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” He mentions the Scribes and Pharisees with respect, as the most pious people of the day, spending their whole lives in the pursuit of righteousness ; but they had not the true principle, and Jesus had a right to demand something more than their formal piety from his disciples. So again we shall see that he once reminded a Jew who had fulfilled all the commandments of the Law that the one only thing he lacked was also the one only thing needful,—namely, love.¹

So Jesus clearly perceived how sharply his own religion contrasted with that of his people ; and he worked out several examples of this contrast, which are contained, like the pictures of the “hypocrites,” in a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus dwells, without the least reserve, upon the conflict of principle between the fundamental law—the charter, so to speak—of Israel, and the charter of the kingdom of God.

But, to avoid misunderstanding, we must repeat that Jesus was firmly convinced that he was himself a good Israelite, and took his stand upon the ground of Israel’s religion. It has often been said that he maintained the Law, but rejected the later doctrinal and ceremonial glosses of the tradition. But this is not true. Nor would such a distinction have had any great value, for the Law and the tradition came, to some extent at least, from the same hands, and breathed the same spirit ; namely, that of the Scribes. Moreover, the tradition contained some elements of the most exalted nature. And,

¹ Matthew xix. 16-22.

apart from this, such a principle of selection could never have occurred to Jesus, for it would have involved the application of historical criticism, of which Jesus and his contemporaries knew nothing. For him, accordingly, Law and tradition were of equal authority, flowed in the same channel, and, in fact, were one.¹ He preserved, adopted, and defended against assailants much that was only contained in the tradition ;² and many things that were written in the Law he rejected as mere human inventions, as concessions to the people's sins that could no longer be allowed, or as antiquated in principle.³ Nor is it true that Jesus left the moral precepts of the Law unchallenged, and abolished its ceremonial. On the contrary, he never thought of such a thing as abolishing its ceremonial, and he vigorously condemned whatever he held to be unsatisfactory in its moral teaching. The fact is, that in separating and sifting the contents of the Law and the tradition he followed out the principles of the ancient prophets, and consulted nothing but his own judgment and the experience of his own soul. His standard was the knowledge of moral and religious truth which his own inner life had given him ; his object was to purge the religion of Israel from all the corrupt admixture and rescue it from all the unfavorable circumstances that had prevented (as he believed) its full application, and so to make its true power felt, its true glory seen ; to make it answer its true purpose, and fulfil its true destiny, — in a word, to realize it.⁴ What had been incipiently or imperfectly represented in Israel's religion from the first would (he believed) be realized in all its fulness in the kingdom of God ; and he himself had only to declare plainly what the commandments of the Law and the promises of the prophets had implied.⁵ He believed, therefore, that his new teaching was but the ripe fruit which the buds and blossoms of the old dispensation had already contained in germ. But whenever the old teaching in any way opposed or obstructed the new principle of religious life ; whenever a precept of the Law appeared to be the outcome of the moral immaturity of early Israelite society, and had therefore lost its meaning for the kingdom of God and become simply mischievous, — then he condemned it without reserve and without mercy.

¹ Compare Matthew xv. 6, 11, xxiii. 2, 3.

² For instance, Matthew vi. 17, xviii. 10, xxii. 29.

³ For instance, Matthew xv. 11, 9, xix. 8, 6, v. 38-42.

⁴ Matthew v. 17.

⁵ For instance, Matthew xxiii. 29, 31, 32.

Let us listen to some of the examples of this contrast. We need not be surprised to find Jesus, apparently at least, setting up his own authority as a lawgiver against the commandments given by Moses to the forefathers. It does but show that he possessed that confidence in his own moral judgments without which he could not have heralded the kingdom of God, or borne witness to the moral ideal :—

“ You have heard that our forefathers were taught, ‘ Thou shalt not kill ; the murderer shall be sentenced by the magistrates.’ But I say that whoever is angry with his brother shall be sentenced by the magistrates, and whoever says ‘ Fool ! ’ to his brother shall be sentenced by the Sanhedrim ; but whoever says ‘ Scoundrel ! ’ shall be condemned to the fire of Gehenna.”

Jesus refers to the sixth commandment ; but since murder need not be contemplated among his hearers, who were future citizens of the kingdom of God, he set aside the letter of the Law and applied to anger what had formerly been the punishment of murder ; nay, he even increased the punishment should anger burst into invective or be blinded by fury. Thus only could the true purpose of the commandment be fulfilled, which was to dry up the bitter source of passion in the heart which circumstances might at any time foster into a murderous deed. As to the several stages of condemnation, two of them are borrowed from the judicial system of the day, and the third indicates that the crime is too heavy to be dealt with by any human tribunal ; but they are to be taken simply as expressing the increase and culmination of the guilt.

A similar extension is given to the seventh commandment :

“ You have heard that it has been said, ‘ Thou shalt not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks upon a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Here, too, the will is taken for the deed ; evil desire, the root of sin, is struck at, and its promptings are condemned.

The nature of the third commandment puts it upon a slightly different footing :—

“ Again, you have heard that our forefathers were taught, ‘ Thou shalt not swear falsely, but shalt keep the oath thou hast made to the Lord.’ But I say to you, Swear not at all ; neither by the heaven, for it is God’s throne ; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool ; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. And swear not by your own head,

for you cannot make a single hair white or black. But let your ‘yes!’ be yes, and your ‘no!’ no; for whatever you say more comes from the Evil One.”

We shall return presently to the rabbinical subtleties to which Jesus here refers. We see at once that to his mind a commandment forbidding a man to break his word or break his oath implied such a low state of morality as to have lost all significance for his hearers. So he substituted a strict prohibition of all oaths. To require an oath of his followers would be to do them a shameful and unmerited wrong, for it would imply a doubt as to their invincible love of truth; and for any of them to take an oath would be a grievous and voluntary act of humiliation, inasmuch as it would justify a suspicion against their honesty. Even an emphatic repetition of their “yes” or “no” would be contrary to the spirit and intention of the Master; and that is why we have followed the text of James¹ in preference to that of Matthew. To demand or to offer any further confirmation of a simple “yes” or “no” appeared to Jesus something more than a mere personal slight. It was slander against human nature and contempt of human kind; and as such was the work of the devil, the result of his influence in the world. At this point, then, Jesus, who does nothing by halves, comes into direct conflict with the Law. Neither that nor any thing else can divert his steady gaze from the realization of his ideal of society.

But the contrast is far sharper yet when he attacks the principle of the Mosaic penal code:—

“ You have heard that it has been said, ‘ An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Resist not the evil-doer; but if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn the left cheek to him also; and if any one threatens to go to law to take your shirt from you, let him have your coat too; and if any one presses you for a mile, carry his baggage two miles for him.”

The first Gospel weakens the passage by adding a saying that may be genuine, but if so was certainly not uttered on this occasion: “ Give to him that asks of you, and turn not away from him who would borrow of you.” These additional words simply enjoin benevolence and generosity, whereas the real contrast aims at nothing less than attacking the whole principle of retaliation. That is to say, it overthrows the very foundation of divine and human right upon which Jewish society was built! It is true of course that we are

¹ James v. 12.

not to take the precepts literally. To follow out the first of them to the letter would be intensely aggravating instead of sootling. But the general commandment not to return evil for evil, but rather to endure every outrage quietly and push submission to its utmost limits, was certainly meant to be obeyed in the strictest and widest sense. When inclined to call it humiliating or impossible to carry out such a principle, we ought to remember that to exclude the least thought of anger, impatience, or vindictiveness, when we are ill-treated, shows no want of spirit, but the very highest exercise of moral power. And again, there is so much inherent and intrinsic goodness deep down in human nature that true gentleness must put the evil-doer to shame, and make him loathe his own wickedness. In a word, the evil in the world cannot be overcome by evil, but only by good ; and social order would at least be better maintained by such conduct as that laid down by Jesus than by penal laws and houses of correction.

How thoroughly Jesus was in earnest in this and his other demands appears from one concluding contrast between the old and the new principles. Here he comes to the very root of the moral life, — namely, faith in God, — and to the deepest, that is the religious, principle which must regulate the relations of men to one another ; and here he gives expression to the hardest demand of the most exalted virtue :—

“ You have heard that it has been said, ‘ Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that you may be sons of the heavenly Father who makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain to the just and the unjust.

“ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect !”

Here Jesus pushes the difference of principle that separated his teaching from Judaism to its utmost limits ; raises the demands of the gospel of the kingdom to the highest point ; and, by laying down such a course of action and pointing to such a goal for himself and others, unconsciously places his own exalted character in the strongest possible light.

We must try to understand this saying fully. The last line forms a conclusion of surpassing beauty to the final contrast, and therefore to the whole series that reaches its climax in it ; but Matthew inserts just before it, “ For if you love those that love you, what reward have you ? Even the very publicans do the same. And if you only greet your brothers, what is that to boast of ? The very heathen themselves do the

same." These additional words are evidently misplaced, nor are they strung to nearly so high a pitch as the saying they interrupt and weaken. "Your brothers" and "the heathen," however, are really the classes to which Jesus refers as "your neighbor" and "your enemy," and this may be the reason why the passage was inserted here. Luke did not at all understand the saying, but interpreted "neighbor" and "enemy" in a narrower sense, and supposed that Jesus was dwelling on one of the many duties which were already recognized by Jew and heathen; namely, the duty of loving one's personal enemies and returning good for evil. On this supposition he worked out the saying as follows:—

"But to you that hear I say, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that malign and persecute you. . . . For if you do good to them that do good to you, what thanks do you deserve? Even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those of whom you hope to borrow, what thanks do you deserve? Even sinners lend each other money in hopes of the favor being returned. But you must love your enemies and do good, and lend without hoping for any return; then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is gracious even to the unthankful and the wicked. Be merciful, then, even as your Father is merciful!"

What Jesus really meant was something very different and much more than this. He was announcing his new religious principle of moral life in all its breadth. The Jewish religion insisted on religious hatred; but Jesus requires love which, like the love of God, regards no difference of faith. It was not too much to say that hitherto the Israelite had been compelled to regard it as a stern and sacred duty towards his god to hate his enemy,—not, of course, his personal enemy, whom he was bound to treat kindly,¹ but the enemy of his people and his religion. In recent times the Scribes had done their best to impress this duty in still sharper forms upon the people. Indeed, the whole of the Old Testament, with a very few exceptions,² breathes a spirit of love to fellow-countrymen and fellow-believers (neighbors),³ but of hatred and vengeance against the heathen (or enemies). This hatred was not only allowed but required of all right-thinking people.⁴

¹ Exodus xxiii. 4, 5; Proverbs xxv. 21.

² Ruth and Jonah. See vol. ii. chap. xix. p. 520. ³ Leviticus xix. 17, 18.

⁴ Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22; compare *e.g.* Deuteronomy vii. 2; Jeremiah xlvi. 10; Psalm cxxxvii. 7-9; Nehemiah xiii. 28, 29, *et seq.*; and vol. ii. chap. xxix. p. 308.

Jesus, on the other hand, was not content with such a self-conquest or such a degree of moral culture as may be needed to love a mere personal enemy. He knew the danger of a religious man feeling justified in hating, or even bound to hate, those whose enmity he had incurred for God's sake ; and so he insists that national and religious hate must never be regarded as a demand of faith, or as praiseworthy zeal for God, but that his disciple must imitate the divine example, and love those that hate God, — love the idolatrous and the unrighteous with a love so deep and strong that he must needs pray for the very men that are persecuting his people and his faith ! For the heathen, for the hated Romans, for the worshippers of demons, for the haughty oppressors, he must pray for very love ! In the parable of the Good Samaritan we have a picture of such love ; or rather we are shown how humanity overthrows the walls of separation which tradition, descent, and dogmatic faith have raised, and makes a neighbor of the national and religious foe.¹

On what did Jesus base his high command ? “ As a man is, so is his god ; ” but again, “ As a man believes his god to be, so does he conceive of his duty.” *The God of Jesus was not the God of the Old Testament.* Jesus had felt in his heart what he saw reflected in the impartial bounty of Nature ; as rain and sunshine moistened and fostered the land of the wicked and the good, of the heathen and the Jew alike, so had he felt in his heart that God’s love extended, unrestrained and impartial, without distinction and without exception, to all his creatures.

“ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect ! ”

Perfect in love as bearing the image of God, as followers of him, as his own sons and daughters ! This is a far other and far higher command than the old one : “ Be holy, for I, Yahweh, your god, am holy ! ” For this command — the complete and true epitome of the Law and the whole religion of Israel — was confined to Israel alone ; and, moreover, true perfection consists in love rather than holiness. The command of Jesus, then, is higher, — and yet it is the same. For the saying of Jesus brings out what was implied in the old command, — applies it without reserve, and for the first time *realizes* it.

That saying is his eternal glory. We regard it as the highest truth that ever passed the lips of man. It is the

¹ Luke x. 29-37. See also chap. xxiv. p. 292 of this volume.

great all-comprehending truth. The mere fact that Jesus uttered it would not in itself be so great a glory to him had he not first exacted from himself what he now demanded of his disciples. Nor did he leave it as an abstract principle; but he applied it unconditionally to the various relations and circumstances of life. In his own conscience he read the commandment to be perfect after the highest type of perfection, and in his life he fulfilled it.

These words give the death-blow to human pride. With such a calling how can we speak of merit, of self-satisfaction, of reward? Such thoughts were the canker of Jewish piety; but listen how Jesus would replace them:¹ “Which of you that has a slave at the plough or in the pasture-land will say to him when he comes home from the field, ‘Come quick and lie down with me at table!’ Surely he would rather say, ‘Get my meal ready, and wait upon me, and when I have done, you may have something to eat and drink yourself.’ And does he thank the slave for doing as he was told? Even so, when you have done all that is commanded you, you ought to say, ‘We are unworthy servants, we have but done what we were bound to do.’” Such is the natural expression of the deep humility roused by the calling to be perfect, even as the heavenly Father is perfect.

And yet how these same words exalt us! What noble powers, what lofty worth, must that being have who can make such a demand of himself; who can climb up to such a destiny! It is man’s patent of nobility, the proof of the true divinity of his nature!

Now that we have come to the end of our account of the attitude that Jesus took up towards the religion of his people, let us glance back over the ground we have traversed.

The Gospels never mention that Jesus offered a feast or thank-offering, or made a vow, a pilgrimage to the temple, or an offering of purification to remove any ceremonial uncleanness. But our accounts are so imperfect that we have purposely abstained from drawing any inferences from a fact that may after all be accidental.

Our conclusions may be summed up in the celebrated words from the Sermon on the Mount: “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” This saying is generally chosen as the starting point for an examination of the attitude taken up

¹ Luke xvii. 7-10.

by Jesus with regard to the religion of his people. We have not made such a use of it, though we have already referred to and explained it;¹ for in itself it is too ambiguous to give us much light, and it is only in connection with the five contrasts that its meaning becomes clear. Besides, it is rather doubtful whether the saying is genuine. For the words "Think not" imply that there were some of his followers who supposed that he did intend to destroy the Law and the Prophets,—that is to say, to reject the divine revelation utterly, and sweep away the whole religion of Israel; and we can hardly believe that this was the case. The saying can only be defended as authentic on the supposition that it was uttered by Jesus in answer to the accusations of his enemies, towards the close of his life. But whether authentic or not, it exactly describes the position of Jesus with regard to the Law and the Prophets.

And now we have the key in our hands to reconcile the contradictions which we began our last chapter by enumerating. Since Jesus had few points of sympathy and many points of conflict and hostility with the piety of his contemporaries, it is easy to understand his being put to death as a heretic; for his new principle of life struck at the very root of Israel's religion. But inasmuch as he was himself an Israelite heart and soul; inasmuch as he appealed to his great predecessors, believed himself to be simply bringing out the true spirit of the Law and the Prophets, abolished no religious forms, never gave a dogmatic form to his principles, and still less worked them out into a doctrinal system,—we can almost understand how his very Apostles might afterwards, under a combination of unfavorable circumstances, succumb to Jewish orthodoxy, and how Paul might suppose that Jesus, born under the Law, had suppressed all self-complacent parade of liberty, and had become a servant of the circumcision.² And finally, the result of the work of Jesus, when once his principles had taken shape, might easily be to call a new religion into life. All this will come out clearly as we go along, in the light of the examination we have just concluded.

About a century after the death of Jesus, a profound writer, one of the loftiest spirits of Christian antiquity, gave the following emblematic description of his work:³—

Jesus (the word become flesh) was invited with his friends

¹ See pp. 225 ff.; pp. 220, 221, 230.

² Galatians iv. 4; Romans xv. 3, 8.

³ John ii. 1-11.

to the great wedding feast (the kingdom of God at its commencement) which the heavenly bridegroom (God) had prepared for his guests (the sons of Israel). But the joy of the festival was marred by the absence of that wine of the spirit which had flowed in the days of the prophets. There was nothing but the water of religious forms left now! So the mother of Jesus (the Israelite community of God) lamented the defect to her great son. At the time he put her appeal aside; but she, knowing what to expect from him, urged the attendants to pay strict attention to his words. And ere long he told them to fill the six great vessels of stone (that stood there to meet the requirements of Levitical purity) up to the brim with water, and then to draw it off and take it to the steward. The water was turned into wine! Instead of forms he gave the spirit; for life according to the Law he substituted that free love of God which is the life of the spirit. And not only did he cause this spiritual life that had dried up and died to flow forth in inexhaustible abundance, but he made it so much nobler than it had been in the old days of the prophets that the steward, who knew not whence this new wine came, expressed his surprise to the bridegroom that he had set the poorer wine before them first and had kept back this noble vintage till the end. The joy of the wedding feast was now secure; the kingdom of God would win its way; the future was assured! Water was turned into wine; the symbols of the old dispensation were facts under the new; the formal religion of the Law was superseded by the spiritual religion, by the living piety of love! This was the first great sign that Jesus gave, the revelation of his divine glory. Henceforth his true disciples believed in him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PROPHET IN HIS NATIVE PLACE.

LUKE IV. 16-30; MATTHEW XIII. 54-58; MARK III. 20, 21, 31-35.¹

IT is Saturday morning, and the sun is shining brightly on the houses of the lovely Nazareth, nestling among their vines and olive trees. The people of the place, in scattered groups, are turning their steps to the synagogue at the city gate. It is even fuller than usual to day, for the report has already spread among the villagers that their former townsman, Jesus the son of Joseph, who has been so much talked about of late, is at last going to speak in his own city for once!

Let us go in. The appointed section of the Law has been read, and a passage from the Prophets is to follow. And now Jesus, upon whom all thoughts are fixed, rises from his place to signify his wish to read. The attendant takes a roll from the chest and gives it him. It is the book of Isaiah. It opens at that consoling prophecy of the mission and the work of the servant of Yahweh, and Jesus reads aloud. As the well-known words drop from his lips, they seem to gain a special power and a deeper meaning: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and sight to the blind; to rescue them that are bruised; to preach a blessed year of the Lord." . . . And here he stopped, for he could not follow the prophet who addressed the captives in Babylon any further; he could not follow him in describing the time when Yahweh should make manifest his love to his people, as "the day of vengeance of our God."²

Then he rolled up the book, gave it back to the attendant, and, while perfect silence and strained attention reigned in the synagogue, sat down to speak about the passage he had read: "To-day this prophecy is fulfilled in your ears." Does Jesus mean to say that he is the servant of the Lord, the prophet sent by God to fulfil these glorious promises of the Messianic age? He does! Only hear how he dwells upon his mission

¹ Mark vi. 1-6; Matthew xii. 46-50; Luke viii. 19-21.

² Isaiah lxi. 1, 2. See also vol. ii. chap. xii. p. 435.

and the task of his life, upon his expectations and his divine certainty that they are not vain, upon himself and all that he has gone through! — for here, in his native city, he cannot help speaking of things that he passes over in silence elsewhere; upon the blessings of the great deliverance that is drawing near.

He ceases, and a murmur of approval rises on every side. There is but one thought expressed in every eye and upon every face: “How wonderful! How beautiful!” But this and all other impressions are lost the next moment in sheer amazement! Who would ever have expected this of him? And see, the people are all bending their heads together and whispering, “Surely this can’t be Joseph’s son! How is it possible?”

And is this all that his former fellow-townspeople have to say to the prophet’s message? — not a single question? not a single vow? not a single cry of sacred inspiration or of fervent thanksgiving to God from end to end of the synagogue? Dull of heart, superficial and unbelieving, they could not understand him. He begins again, but now there is a sternness in his voice that was not there before. “No doubt you will remind me of the proverb, ‘Physician, heal thyself! Before you look after others, look after your own authority as a prophet here! We hear that you have done wonders in Capernaum, do as much here in your own city!’” Then, after a moment’s silence, he adds, to show that he was prepared for such a reception: “I tell you, a prophet is never honored in his native place. Be assured that in Elijah’s days, when there was a drought for three years and a half, and a fearful universal famine, there were many poor widows in Israel; yet Elijah was not sent to one of them, but to a heathen widow at Sarepta, near Sidon. And in the time of the prophet Elisha there were lepers enough in Israel; yet not one of them, but only Naaman the Syrian, was cleansed.”

Fierce cries and protests interrupt him, and he can say no more. Is that the way of prophets, then? — to neglect their own townspeople and countrymen for strangers? What intolerable arrogance! Indignation seizes the whole assembly, and they are resolved to a man not to let such things be said with impunity. They start from their seats, rush upon Jesus, and fill the place with tumult and confusion. “Drive him out of the city!” “Hurl him from the cliff!” they shriek; and the fierce rabble drags him through the city gate, and up the mountain, to the top of an almost perpendicular

precipice, intending to cast him headlong down. But he passes calmly through the raging crowd as though they had been suddenly struck blind, and departs from the unbelieving city of his birth.

However far from credible this story in its present form may be, it is certainly remarkably clear and graphic. Nor is this its only merit. It has great value as exemplifying one of the methods of teaching adopted by Jesus. And again, all the sayings it attributes to him bear the stamp of authenticity. In the first place, as to the text of his discourse, we know from other sources¹ that he had a great admiration for the book of Isaiah, and that in the servant of Yahweh especially he recognized his own image, or rather an indication of his own work. Again, Luke can hardly have invented the fact that Jesus was taunted with the proverb, “Physician, heal thyself!” for he obviously misunderstands its application himself, and therefore puts a false interpretation of it into the mouth of Jesus. In its true sense it is so thoroughly natural on the lips of the Nazarenes! Though they could not point to the smallest imperfection in the character of Jesus, yet they muttered, “Let him look nearer home before beginning to treat us as sick men that need his help! He seems to think there is no room for improvement in himself!” It is just the way of shallow natures, when stirred to envy and malice, because a man whom they regarded as simply one of themselves has shot far, far above them! Lastly, the citation of the examples set by Elijah and Elisha is in perfect harmony with the use which Jesus made of history, and with his later opinions concerning his people.

But there are many difficulties. This can hardly have been the real occasion upon which Jesus reminded his hearers of the privileges granted to heathen, for they have no bearing on his subject. And Luke is certainly quite wrong in putting this visit to Nazareth at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, before his settlement at Capernaum. Indeed, he contradicts himself in this.² Finally, the concluding scene, with the murderous and inexplicable fury of the citizens and the miraculous escape of Jesus, is a pure fiction. But the mistake is made on purpose, and the fiction has a meaning. The Evangelist wished to give a single typical sketch of the reception Jesus met with at the hands of his people and of his rejection by the men of his own country, which proved such a bless-

¹ See, for example, pp. 94, 197, 210, *et seq.*

² Compare Luke iv. 23 with verse 31.

ing to the heathen. The scene which thus foreshadowed the future was naturally placed at the beginning of the career of Jesus. The simple and trustworthy tradition which is still preserved by Matthew and Mark of the reception given to Jesus by his former townsmen lent itself admirably to the purpose of Luke, and accordingly he adopted it with such additions and modifications as his special object suggested.

Let us now turn to the genuine historical account, just alluded to, of the appearance of Jesus in his native place. We gain some such idea of what took place as follows:—

When he had made a deep impression at Capernaum and elsewhere, and had labored for some time, especially in the land of Gennesareth, Jesus determined to visit Nazareth and preach the kingdom of God there also. We can understand why he long deferred his intention, and shrank from carrying it out even now. He did not disguise the fact that his native place promised him but small success; and there, of all places, where his own relatives and fellow-townsmen were concerned, failure would be most painful. But these forebodings must not hold him back. Now that he had established his fame as a prophet or teacher of the people elsewhere, he must make the attempt. He could no longer hold himself guiltless, if the men of his native city did not hear the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

So he extended one of his journeys with the Twelve beyond the usual limits. He left the shores of the lake at Magdala, turned inland by Beth-Arbeel and the Horns of Chattin, passed Tabor on his left hand, and so reached the little city in which he had passed his childhood, his youth, and indeed all his life till within the last few months.¹ What conflicting emotions came over him when he saw once more the familiar scenes of his work and play, his contemplation, and his prayer! What a change had taken place in this short time, not in the place or the people, indeed, but in himself! How would he fare amidst them now?

Of course he went to his mother's house, and probably stayed there several days. He had never been there since he began his work; and now, alas! he found not what he had longed for so fervently. He found no heart open to receive his gospel. The very fact that it was *his* gospel was an insuperable obstacle to it. Not that his mother, his brothers and sisters, married or single, and his other relatives who

¹ See the plan in Map V.

lived at Nazareth ever thought of withdrawing their affection and esteem from him; but they expressed their surprise at his assuming the prophetic function, they did not conceal their disapproval of his actions, they showed no sympathy when he spoke of his mission; in short, they gave him a thousand proofs that they did not understand him. They were far too much accustomed to him, had too often seen him go in and out, seen him work and rest, eat and drink, to be able to look on him as a prophet. The same blindness which had prevented them from expecting any thing from him before, prevented their believing in him now. Perhaps, too, some of them, especially so strict a Jew as James for instance, could hardly brook his free opinions and mode of life. So he met with no appreciation, no enthusiasm, no faith; and such faint hopes as he had ever entertained were dashed to the ground.

He felt that this grievous disappointment at home was but a sample of what he might expect from his townspeople in general. When the Sabbath broke, he went to the synagogue — with what feelings we may partly guess. For twenty, perhaps thirty, years in succession he had gone there diligently, week by week, to receive instruction in the Scripture; and now he came with the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets in his heart and upon his lips. Must it, could it, be in vain? He preached with all his constraining beauty and power, and all who heard were filled with amazement when he ceased. “How comes *he*,” said they, “by all this wisdom and power? Is he not Joseph the carpenter’s son, whose mother Mary is still living, and whose brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas are settled here in the town, and all his sisters too? Where should he get this wisdom from?” And thereupon one was vexed as if he had been injured, and another was full of contempt. But Jesus was prepared for his reception, and simply said, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his native city, and by his own relatives, and in his own home!” He could do nothing; or, as the Evangelists express it, intending the words to be taken literally: “He healed but very few sick people there. He could not do more, because of their unbelief. Then he went and preached in the surrounding places.” The Nazarenes did but furnish an example of the common want of insight which never can pierce below the surface of things. They knew the prophet’s origin, and of course that origin failed to explain how there could be any thing remarkable in him; and their superficial prejudices

prevented them from believing in any thing they could not account for. As for originality and the summons from on high, they had no conception of it,—at least not in the case of one whom they had known as a little child, whom they had seen as he grew up learning his lessons or playing, and then taking to his trade and executing orders. How could *he* be a prophet, and the herald of the kingdom of God? No, no! they knew who he was and were not to be imposed upon. And to this day the ordinary run of mankind judge by the same kind of purely accidental circumstance. No height of moral grandeur will convince them that those with whom they are familiar are any thing but very ordinary sort of people.

Jesus, as we have seen, complained not only of his fellow-townsman, but also of the members of his own family. Did a definite breach take place before he left Nazareth? All we know is that the natural affection, the ties of kindred, remained unbroken; but his relatives' want of sympathy with him in his highest and holiest life, their want of faith in his mission and his preaching, caused a sense of alienation to spring up, and made him feel that a chasm yawned between himself and them. Sufficient evidence of this appears soon afterwards. Jesus had returned to Capernaum and was again surrounded by a crowd of admiring disciples and dogged by suspicious observers. He was speaking in his own house, and was surrounded by so many hearers that it was impossible for any one outside to approach him, when he was disturbed by a flutter among his hearers, many of whom looked towards the door. Then some one said, "Master! your mother and your brothers are there outside, and wish to speak to you." What could have made them come? It can have been nothing but anxious affection for the son or brother they sought. In those days such an expedition—one long, or two short, days' journey—was not undertaken without some weighty reason. Mark declares that they had heard of Jesus being so constantly engaged in teaching or in conversation with those who came to him that he did not even allow himself time for meals; and says that upon this they set out to get hold of him and bring him back to Nazareth, hoping that in the family circle, under the old roof, he might quiet down a little and come to himself; for they said, "He is beside himself!" Did their misunderstanding of him really go so far? Matthew does not mention this; and we are left in

doubt whether it was he who omitted it as too shocking to record, or Mark who inserted it. In the latter case it may have been suggested by an accusation afterwards urged against Paul.¹ At any rate, Jesus himself bears unanswerable testimony to the fact that however praiseworthy and affectionate their motive may have seemed at first sight it was not the true motive of interest in his work ; and they came not to help but to thwart him. When he heard that they were there, and that seeing no chance of gaining access to him they were anxious that he should come out to them, he refused to comply. Nay, his answer gave an undisguised expression to the feeling of deep sadness and the sense of pain which the words “your mother and your brothers” had caused him. “Who are my mother and brothers?” he cried. And then, looking round with deep affection and stretching out his hand over the disciples that sat about him, he added, “These are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

The first two Gospels place this occurrence earlier than the visit to Nazareth and the preaching there ; but we have followed the reverse order, for such conduct on the part of Jesus towards the members of his family would be inexplicable had he not just before been in communication with them, and experienced their inability to comprehend his work and their desire to hinder it. And again, if he visited his native place with even a faint hope of success, it must almost certainly have been before this breach with his own relatives. The order of the two events, however, is of little consequence. They are certainly both of them true ; and the Master’s two sayings as to the fate of a prophet in his native place, and as to his spiritual kin, are unquestionably genuine. The latter, with its uncompromising exposure of the deficiencies of those he loved so dearly, must have given him intense pain when he uttered it. Doubtless he thanked God that friends who had devoted their lives without reserve to the kingdom of God had filled the places near him which his mother and his brothers had left empty, and had given him that support and help which he had sought at home in vain ; but, for all that, it must have been unspeakably distressing to him to push his dearest relatives still further away from him. But who shall say with what tears and entreaties they had already urged him to forsake his work, and warned him against its continuance ? He had resisted them. He had silenced the

¹ 2 Corinthians v. 13; compare Mark iii. 22, 30.

voice of natural affection by the voice of duty, by the voice of God ; and, though the love of his mother and his brothers was at stake, he could not be shaken.

The faith of so many disciples might soothe, but could not heal, the wound. And especially his mother's want of that sympathy which would have been more precious from her than from any other creature must have given him the deepest pain. . . . Once,¹ when he had been uttering words to the people that glowed with sacred power, a woman in the crowd, doubtless herself a mother, could contain her emotion no longer, and cried aloud, "Blessed is the body that bore you and the breast that gave you suck!" There was deep and natural feeling in the woman's cry; but Jesus wished for no panegyric, and at once recalled her attention from himself to her own wants and her own calling. At the same time, we can see that the exclamation had touched a tender string in his heart. He knew too well that kinship of spirit is not always fostered by kinship of flesh. "Not so!" he answered; "but blessed are they who receive the word of God and do it!"

Such was the reception from his relatives and his former fellow-townspeople which Jesus, with his fine perceptions and deep need of sympathy, had to encounter.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RECEPTION OF JESUS BY THE PHARISEES.

LUKE XIV. 1, 7-15, XV. 1, 2, 11-32, XVIII. 9-14, VII. 31-35.²

WE have already seen Jesus on several occasions in company with the Pharisees, and have received no very pleasant impression of their intercourse with each other. To avoid misconception, therefore, we will enter upon a more special examination of the treatment Jesus experienced from the Pharisees. The attitude they assumed to him was of extreme importance; for not only had they a great number of avowed supporters, but they may be regarded as the acknowledged leaders of the religious life of the day. But it is very difficult to arrive at certainty on this subject, for our Evan-

¹ Luke xi. 27, 28.

² Matthew xi. 16-19.

gelists were strongly prejudiced against the Pharisees on account of the final issue of their relations to Jesus, and they do not distinguish sufficiently between different times and circumstances. Again, the Pharisees were not so compactly organized a party as to form the same opinion of Jesus and adopt the same line of conduct towards him in every case. On the contrary, they differed from each other widely in these respects.

The first point to notice is, that we find the Pharisees in company with Jesus at a very early period of his ministry, and that they never withdrew from him to the end of his life. Whether friendly or hostile, they did at least feel some interest in him and in his preaching. He had never to complain of indifference on their part.

It was far otherwise with the rival school. The Sadducees paid little or no attention to Jesus. What did it matter to them that a certain Galilæan rabbi had appeared and taught? The whole thing was beneath their notice, until the fancied danger of some seditious tumult directed their attention to him, and made them wish to put him out of the way. Once or twice, even before the closing period of his life, our authorities mention the Sadducees, and also the political party of Herodians; but this appears to be due to an unintentional confusion.¹

As to the third school of Jewish religion, that of the Essenes, there is no ground for supposing that Jesus ever had any connection with it. Indeed, the Essenes are not once mentioned in the Gospels; and if the fame of Jesus ever reached them, it failed to draw them from their solitude. Important inferences have sometimes been drawn from the fact that the Essenes appear to resemble Jesus in their dissatisfaction with the righteousness of the Pharisees, in their rejection of animal sacrifices, in remaining unmarried, and in forbidding oaths.² But these points of agreement are accidental; for Jesus and the Essenes started from different principles, and in their main conceptions were diametrically opposed to each other. At any rate, if Jesus ever met them at all, it must have been before the beginning of his public career,³ for he never came into contact with them afterwards.

¹ Matthew xvi. 1, 6, 11, 12 (more correctly given in Matthew xii. 38; Mark viii. 11; Luke xii. 1); Mark iii. 6, viii. 15 (more correctly in Matthew xii. 14 Luke xii. 1).

² Compare Matthew v. 20, 23, 24, 33-37, xix. 12.

³ See p. 100.

The connection of Christianity and Essenism dates only from the Apostolic age.¹

On the other hand, Jesus and the Pharisees were in constant communication. They approached each other with good-will, but with caution and reserve. They were disposed to respect one another, but held their judgment suspended, and watched each other narrowly. The Pharisees, with their zeal for religion, and their keen interest in every religious phenomenon of the day, soon fixed their attention on the new preacher of Nazareth. In his main purpose, his pursuit of righteousness and his longing for the kingdom of God, they were in perfect sympathy with him; indeed, he was their disciple.² And if in spite of this they failed to win him over to their party, it certainly was not because they did not care to have him. They repeatedly invited him to their houses, carefully weighed his words and deeds, and were not disposed as yet absolutely to condemn his pretensions as a prophet, though still less prepared to admit them, without some very sufficient reason.³ It is true that the very man who asked him to dinner for the sake of conversing with him, and considered his claim to the prophetic dignity worthy of investigation, might at the same time treat him with neglect, might look upon him with suspicion, and might be prepared to reject him at a moment's notice;⁴ but still we may say that as a general rule the Pharisees listened to him diligently, eagerly availed themselves of every opportunity of speaking to him, and sought his company at least, if not his friendship. If they freely criticised his conduct, or that of his disciples, it was no sign of hostility, but was the expression of natural surprise, or a necessary hint for his future guidance,—in any case a mark of interest. Nay, to the very last some of them at least maintained their friendly relation with him, at any rate externally;⁵ and even when their resentment had reached its climax, they still observed the outward forms of respect and good-will.⁶

Jesus, on his side, had a sincere regard for them. Though their virtue was of a frigid type that could not fail to offend him; though he must have soon perceived their formality and worship of the letter; though he knew that their style of piety was in the utmost danger of resting content with externals, and then addressing itself to the eyes of men,—yet he honored what was honorable in them, and hoped to win them over to

¹ See p. 17, chaps. vi. p. 544, and ix. p. 595.

² See p. 94.

³ Matthew xii. 38.

⁴ See pp. 205 ff.; compare Luke xi. 38, xiv. 1.

⁵ Luke xiii. 31, xvii. 20.

⁶ Matthew xxii. 16, 36.

his own principles of life. If he could do so, the respect which they enjoyed would make them powerful allies in the good cause. In comparison with the sinners, then, he called them "sound" and righteous ; for most of them were men of irreproachable life, and some were really patterns of virtue and piety. He confessed that they had reached a higher stage of righteousness than any other of his fellow-countrymen. But he added that such righteousness was not enough for a citizen of the kingdom of God, and that this irreproachable life lacked the true principle of humility and love. He endeavored to influence their lives and convince them of their errors, and though he did not feel that his special mission was to them, yet he never shrank from intercourse with them, or failed to meet their advances.

Luke is our only authority for a series of invitations to dinner which various Pharisees gave to Jesus, and which he accepted. On these occasions the Evangelist represents sundry conversations, which he gives us, as having taken place. One of these scenes we have already considered.¹ On another occasion, says the Evangelist, Jesus had been asked to dine by a certain Pharisee, and as soon as he arrived he lay down at table without having washed. Upon this his host showed signs of great surprise, and Jesus met him with a crushing rebuke. But this scene was imagined by Luke in order to furnish an occasion for a discourse, which we shall find a more suitable opportunity of giving presently.² A third discourse, the contents of which suggest that it was uttered at table, is said to have been due to the following circumstance : Jesus had entered the house of a certain "chief of the Pharisees" on a Sabbath day, to dine with him, and he noticed that all the guests picked the best places for themselves without waiting for a special invitation. The arrangement of the couches at meals among ancient peoples made the difference between the higher and lower places much more conspicuous than it is with us ; and the place of honor was coveted with proportionate eagerness. So Jesus rebuked the guests, and said : "When you are asked to a wedding feast you should not choose the best place, for it may be that some more distinguished guest has been invited, and that the host will come to you and say, 'Make room for my guest here !' Then you would be filled with shame, and would go to the humblest place you could find. So when you are asked to a meal anywhere, take

¹ See pp. 206, 207.

² Luke xi. 37 ff.; compare Matthew xxiii. See chap. xxxi. p. 382.

the lowest place ; and then perhaps your host will come to you and say, ‘Friend, go up higher !’ and you will be honored in the sight of all the guests. For he who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.” He had a lesson also for his host : “ When you give a dinner or supper, do not invite your friends or brothers, your relatives or wealthy neighbors, for they may very likely invite you, and so return the favor. But ask the poor, the needy, the blind, the crippled. They cannot make any return, and that will bring a blessing on you ; for at the resurrection of the just you will have your reward.” The last words very naturally reminded one of the guests of the great wedding feast to come ; and, perhaps on purpose to draw some answer from Jesus, he exclaimed, “ Blessed are they who shall be admitted to lie down to meat in the kingdom of God !” Upon this Jesus uttered the parable of the great supper, which we shall consider on another occasion.¹

We may safely attribute much of this scene to Luke himself, who is the least trustworthy of the three Evangelists. For instance, the Pharisees had not any “ chiefs ; ” and we may well doubt whether these discourses of Jesus are in their true places, and whether good breeding would not have prevented their being uttered on such an occasion. Finally, the commendation of the poor and helpless perhaps betrays the Ebionite proclivities of one of Luke’s authorities. The expression is elsewhere used for sinners.² But this is of minor consequence.

We return to the relations of Jesus and the Pharisees.

It seems that the first cause of offence was the Master’s conduct towards sinners. It shocked and offended the Pharisees so much, just because of the respect they entertained and the interest they felt in him. Perhaps some of them might have formally joined him, had not such offensive conduct on his part made it impossible. It was indeed bringing religion into contempt, giving that which was holy to the dogs, flinging pearls before swine, defiling the name of the Lord, when one whom many held to be a prophet, one who was undoubtedly a wonderful teacher, actually threw himself away upon the godless and abandoned class of unclean outcasts ! We can hear the sound of their indignation in the question they addressed to his disciples when he invited Levi to his house. We can trace the sense of loathing on Simon’s face when

¹ See chap. xxiv. p. 292.

² Luke xiv. 21.

Jesus allowed the sinful woman to touch him unrebuked. Now Jesus, on his side, never denied or excused the moral degradation of these people. He never ascribes any virtue to them, or finds any thing to commend in them except their penitence. But for the very reason that they were sinners they stood in need of him; and in defence of his conduct he appealed to the very nature of the case itself, and to the call he had experienced in his heart. Perhaps, too, he intended that citation from Hosea, “Mercy, and not sacrifice!” as an appeal to the Pharisees to raise up the despised and abominated peoples of the land, rather than congratulate themselves on their strict observance of the Law.¹ In vain! Their repugnance increased rather than diminished as time went on. “He actually touches lepers and such creatures,” they would say, “and tramples under foot the laws of cleanness which distinguish Israel, and mark it off from the heathen.”

“And all the publicans and sinners,” we read, “used to come and associate with him like friends. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured at it greatly, and said, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them!’”

And now Jesus condemned their pride and want of love in stronger terms than he had used before. He chose the form of a parable that put God’s fatherly love to the repentant sinner in the strongest light, and threw into the darkest shade the cruelty of the rigid devotees of the Law. It is a masterly sketch, and all the figures in it are drawn from life:

A certain man of substance, living on his own estate, had two sons. Once on a time the younger came to him and said: “Father, let me have my share of the family possessions.” He could find no peace or satisfaction any more at home, and he wanted to see something of the world, to be at liberty, to be his own master, and to live after his own fancy. Should not his father have dissuaded him from going? Should he not have kept him back by force? We must remember that there was nothing extravagant in the wish itself, for in the East the laws of inheritance were strictly regulated; disinheritting an elder and preferring a younger son were things unknown, and wills were seldom made at all. The eldest son succeeded to all his father’s rights, and received a double share of his possessions. In this case, then, the second son might very well be bought out, so to speak, by the payment in advance of his third of the family effects. And this is what actually happened. The elder son remained at home

¹ See p. 218.

with his father, henceforth the sole heir and virtual proprietor of the estate. The younger brother, after a few days' delay, collected all his possessions, sold whatever he could not carry away, left his family and his native place, and went and settled in a distant country.

Here he soon fell into an abandoned life, and wasted all he had. To increase his misery, when all was gone, a great famine rose in the country. But for this he might well have gained a subsistence, but as it was he began to suffer actual hunger. Driven to the utmost straits, at last he entered the service of a citizen of the place, who sent him into his fields to feed his pigs,—the most degrading occupation which a Jew could imagine. And even then he could not satisfy his hunger; but when he drove home the pigs in the evening, and the men came with their food, and he saw how greedily they swallowed it, he could not suppress a hungry longing to have his fill even of that! But of course there was none for him. The brutes were of value, and must be well attended to in such a time of scarcity; but who could spare a thought for the swineherd? At last his overwhelming sense of misery brought him to repentance. "How many of my father's laborers," he said to himself,—"how many of his hired laborers, who are not even his own men,—have abundance of sweet food, while I am here dying of hunger! I will rise up and go to my father, and say to him, 'Father! I have sinned against heaven, and have grieved your very soul. I am not worthy of the name of son. But drive me not away; let me stay with you as a hireling!'" His resolution was made; and he turned his face homewards.

What a long and miserable journey! What conflicting thoughts chased each other through his heart! How would his father receive him? . . . At last he saw his old home in the distance, and soon perceived that some one was hurrying to meet him. It was his father himself, from whose thoughts he had never for a moment been absent. His anxious parent had seen him from afar; had recognized him instantly in spite of his miserable condition, and now fell upon his neck with pity that no words could utter, and kissed him tenderly. Deeply moved, the young man disengaged himself from his embrace, fell down upon the ground, and cried: "Father! I have sinned against heaven, and have grieved your very soul. I am not worthy of the name of son"—he could not say the rest after the reception his father had given him. Not a single word of reproach was uttered by the parent, but

as soon as they reached the house he cried to some of the servants who came running out to welcome the wanderer on his return : “ Bring him a cloak — the best we have — and take away these things. Get a bath ready, and dress him, and put a gold ring on his finger and sandals on his feet, that he may look like a free-born man and take his place with others once again. And do you,” he added, turning to other servants, “ get ready a great feast this very night. Kill the fatted calf, and see that singers and all else are provided. We may well rejoice and make merry ; for my son here was dead, — dead to heaven and to me, — and now he is alive again ; he was lost, and is found ! ” His commands were joyfully and quickly obeyed ; and by evening the full tide of festivity had set in.

Meanwhile the elder son was superintending the work at a distant field, so that no one had gone to fetch him. When the day’s work was over, and he returned to the house, he could not imagine what had happened. All was commotion ; and the sound of the music and dancing, and the flare of the torches greeted his ears and eyes while he was still at a distance. For a time he stood outside the house lost in amazement, till one of the attendants happened to come out, perhaps to fetch something. He called him and asked him what it was all about. “ Why, your brother has come back,” said he, “ and your father has killed the fatted calf [the most important event of the day, perhaps, in the servant’s eyes] because he has returned safe and sound.” That was it, indeed ? The elder brother turned away in wrath, and refused to go into the house. But the father heard of it, and came and pressed him kindly to come in. But he replied : “ Think how many years I have been serving you, without ever once disobeying your commands, and yet you never rewarded my fidelity and diligence by giving me so much as a kid to make a feast for my friends. But now that this son of yours, who wasted your possessions with harlots, has come back again, you have killed the fatted calf for him ! ” “ Son,” said the father gently, “ what is this that you have said ? You have always stayed with me ; and all that I have is yours, for you are my only heir. But how could we help rejoicing and making merry, — for this your brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found ? ”

This is the best known of all the parables of Jesus ; and it deserves to be so, for it is the profoundest and most beautiful. How true it is ! We recognize at once the publican

who has left his Father's house, left the service of God and communion with him, but has now returned in penitence. And in contrast with him stands the Pharisee, still represented in the most favorable light, strictly religious and irreproachably moral, but yet serving God as if for hire,—more like a slave than a son, proud of his own virtue, without love and without generosity. But though this application is obvious enough, and was certainly intended by Jesus, yet the parable had also a wider scope. Luke, in recording it, thought especially of the relations in which heathen and Jew stood to each other and to God, and represents Jesus as condemning the contemptuous pride and exclusiveness of the Jews. That distant foreign land he takes to mean the outside world that knows not God,—the world of heathendom, of which the swine are also a symbol. The two sons represent mankind as the children of God; and the elder son is Israel, the heir of the promise of salvation. It is impossible to say whether Luke (or his authority) modified the parable to suit this special interpretation, and, if so, how far the alterations went. But even this application limits the scope of the parable unduly. Jesus tells us a history that is as old as humanity itself, and yet is ever new,—the history of the sinner who, though a child of the heavenly Father, does violence to his divine nature, and thirsting for a fancied liberty tears himself away from God; nor does God lay fetters on his freedom. He dashes on in self-delusion until the sense of his misery brings him to reflection and repentance. Then his deep sense of guilt and his true penitence strengthen him to come in deep humility and childlike trust and throw himself at the Father's feet. And the Father's love comes forth to meet him and welcome him, and to restore him to the honor he had lost. So long as sin and penitence fill so great a space in the history of human lives, so long will this parable, the gospel of God's grace, shine upon our souls like the morning star!

We will say nothing of the impression which such a story must have made upon the hearers of Jesus, upon the publicans, and, above all, upon the Pharisees. We will only observe that this is another instance¹ of the constantly recurring contrast between Pharisee and publican which runs through the Gospel. They are taken as portraits, or rather types, of two kinds of men; and, before we quit the subject of the of-

¹ Compare pp. 205-207.

fence which Jesus gave to his pious countrymen by his intercourse with sinners, we will give one more sketch which throws off, in a few bold lines, a life-like presentation of these two types of pride and humility. We may note in advance that our custom of kneeling down, closing the eyes, and folding the hands in prayer, was unknown to the Jews : —

Two men went up to the temple to pray ; one was a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood up and prayed thus with himself : “ O God ! I thank thee that I am not like other men, — extortioners, deceivers, adulterers ; or even like this publican here. I fast twice in the week, give tithes of all my income.” . . . And the publican stood at the entrance of the forecourt, and dare not so much as raise his eyes to heaven ; but, forgetting every thing around him, smote his breast in penitence, and cried, “ O God ! be merciful to me, sinner that I am ! ” “ As those two men,” said Jesus, “ went down the steps of the temple, and each returned to his home, I tell you, the publican was justified in the sight of God rather than the Pharisee.”

The picture is drawn from the life, and without a touch of exaggeration. Can we not see those two men, accidentally entering the temple-gate together at one of the hours of prayer ? The one, whose piety is proclaimed by his four great tassels and the broad phylacteries (or prayer-bands) on his forehead and his arm,¹ turns his steps to the temple, because it is more satisfactory to perform religious duties in the sanctuary than elsewhere ; the other, because he can bear his sinful life no longer, and, in the agony of his soul, knows not where to turn but to the Lord. No falsehoods are put upon the lips of the Pharisee, nor is the honor due to him withheld. The duties on the performance of which he facilitates himself are not the ordinary ones which every respectable Jew observed, but the special ones peculiar to him and the other members of his school.² Moreover, he is thankful to God for his virtue. But what are we to say to the self-satisfaction of one who can enumerate his merits in his very prayers ; can look down with contempt on the world in general, and even on the poor penitent who is praying there beside him !

We see at once that the concluding words of the parable are but a modification of that other saying : “ There is more

¹ Compare Matthew xxiii. 5; Numbers xv. 37 ff.; Deuteronomy vi. 8.

² Compare Matthew ix. 14, xxiii. 23.

joy in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine just men that need no repentance." Why so? you may ask. Because in the heart of that one penitent there is the germ of a higher righteousness, of which those devout observers of the Law, with their unimpeachable life and character, have not even a conception! Finally, Luke tells us truly enough that this story was aimed not so much at the Pharisees themselves as at those among the disciples of Jesus, or among the Jews, who were satisfied with themselves and despised others. At the close he repeats the warning: "He who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Let us now return for a moment to the attitude assumed by the Pharisees towards Jesus. We have already seen that from an early period of his ministry they had had a more serious cause of offence, and a heavier charge against him, than that he associated with sinners. It was that in case of need, or when summoned to a deed of love, he did not shrink from violating the Sabbath.¹ We need not dwell on this at present, especially as all the utterances of Jesus on the Law and the tradition, which we shall have to consider in the sequel, were occasioned by the rebukes or the wily questions of the Pharisees. We can well understand that the freedom of Jesus with regard to the Sabbath must have deepened and widened the gulf between him and the Pharisees. Their aversion and distress rose still higher, and at length passed into definite hostility and positive hatred, when they began to suspect, and more than suspect, that he was not only aiming at a goal very different from theirs, but cherished purposes and principles diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of the Jewish religion. Then they began to abominate him from the bottom of their souls as a false prophet, a blasphemer, who did not even shrink from putting himself in the place of the Lord and offering forgiveness to sinners! But still they continued to observe the forms of politeness and respect towards him, even when he on his side had declared open war, and was striving with all his might to counteract their influence and expose their inward corruption in all its nakedness.

But things were far from having reached this point at the time of which we are now speaking. Pharisees who really thought well of Jesus were not yet, as they subsequently became, a rare exception. And Jesus on his side was still

¹ See pp. 214-218

prepared to admit the comparative merits of the Pharisees. At a later period he would have spoken very differently of the elder son, and would by no means have allowed that the respectable and religious Jews had never left the Father's house or disobeyed his commands.¹ But the Pharisees had begun already to be deeply and generally offended by the friend of sinners. We gather this from Jesus himself, who describes, in a kind of parable, the unfavorable reception which both he and his predecessor, utterly unlike each other as they were, had met from the Pharisees, their adherents, and those of the people who blindly followed them :—

“ To what shall I liken this generation? They are like children who go to play in the market-place, but are too sulky and quarrelsome to be pleased with any thing, and say: ‘ We wanted to play at weddings; you ought to have danced. We wanted to play at funerals; you ought to have lamented.’ ”

“ For John came, living like a recluse, fasting without intermission, and practising every possible austerity; and they thought his conduct extravagant, and muttered, ‘ He is mad! ’ The Son of Man came, living like other human beings, enjoying the good things of earth without misgiving, and they thought him a mere worldling; ‘ A glutton and a sot! ’ they cried contemptuously; ‘ A friend of publicans and sinners! ’ But whatever the judgment of these Pharisees and their admirers may be, the Wisdom, which sent John and sent me, is justified and maintained in her rights and honors by all her true children.”

Such was the consolation of Jesus when the leaders of Israel received him so unfavorably.

¹ See Matthew xxi. 28–31, and chap. xxx. p. 370.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE PREACHING OF JESUS WAS RECEIVED BY
THE MASSES.MATTHEW XI. 1-15, 20-24.¹

IT was with true perception of the real state of affairs that Jesus spoke in one breath of the reception given to himself, and of that which John had met. There was the closest connection between the two, and Jesus often recurred to it.² What is true of the Pharisees is equally true of the masses of the people. They, too, were to Jesus just what they had been to John. Now in considering how far Jesus succeeded in bringing home his teaching and his principles to his hearers, and how far their faith responded to his gospel, we ought, perhaps, to lay chief stress upon the reception he experienced from the masses ; for it was to them especially that he consecrated his time, his strength, and his affection, and to reach their hearts was his one great desire. To this subject, then, we will now address ourselves. The direct information we possess is scanty, and not altogether trustworthy ; and we are, therefore, doubly pleased to receive from the lips of Jesus himself an account of the impression produced upon the people by his predecessor.

The occasion which led him to speak upon this subject was very remarkable. John had been sighing for months in his dungeon. What misery this must have been to a man of such burning zeal and boundless energy as his ! Must he not even have hoped that the Lord, who had sent him to his people, would now deliver him from prison ? Meanwhile he was not wholly cut off from the world outside. Some, perhaps many, of his disciples had free access to him. From them he heard that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had himself baptized, but to whom he had probably paid no special regard, had been preaching the kingdom of God in Galilee, and had gradually excited much attention. If John was accurately informed, we may well suppose that his perplexity was great. This Jesus had begun to preach after his imprisonment, gave himself out as a prophet, performed healings, preached the near approach

¹ Luke vii. 18-30, x. 12-15.² Matthew xvii. 12, xxi. 24, 25.

of the kingdom of heaven, and repentance as the necessary condition of entrance into it; and the multitudes streamed to hear him. So far all was well; but the new teacher's mode of life and speech was so very far from his own that he knew not what to think of him. He determined, therefore, to ascertain from Jesus himself what opinion he was to form, and what hopes he might entertain concerning him. So he sent two of his disciples to ask the new teacher in his name, "Are you he that was to come, or are we to expect another?"

They set out on their journey, came to Jesus, and gave him their captive Master's message. The answer they received was expressed in the concise and pregnant language of the day: "Go back and say to John in my name, 'The blind men see, and cripples walk; lepers are cleansed, and deaf men hear; the dead return to life, and the gospel is preached to the poor!' and . . . blessed are they who are not offended by me!" We recognize at once the metaphorical substitution of bodily for spiritual suffering, which was customary with Jesus. The description of the younger son in the parable, who "was dead and is alive again," has furnished us but now with an instance of the analogous use of "death." Nor must we overlook the direct reference to several passages in the Master's favorite prophet Isaiah, where the redemption from Babylon, the repentance of Israel, and the blessedness of the golden age are painted in the same or similar colors.¹ Jesus meant to say, "Tell John what I am doing, and how I am succeeding. Tell him that the 'peoples of the land' and the sinners, who were living without God and his commandments, are now being called in and rescued, and the blessed promises of the Lord are beginning to be fulfilled!" The only dark side to the picture was the offence which these very things gave to the respectable and virtuous classes. "Blessed are they," said Jesus in conclusion, "who are not offended, as the guides of the people are, by what I do."

The last words cannot be meant as a warning to John not to be shaken in his own fidelity. Nor must we understand the list of physical afflictions literally, though perhaps Matthew and certainly Luke did so, as appears from the additions they make. Indeed, both the question and the answer seem to have been a good deal tampered with, and their original meaning is not easy to divine. The Evangelists evidently took it that John asked, "Are you the Messiah?" and Jesus

¹ Isaiah xxix. 18, xxxv. 5, 6, lxi. 1; compare vol. ii. chap. xi., p. 425; xii p. 435.

answered, "Yes." But what John expected was the coming of Yahweh himself. He said nothing of a Messiah;¹ and even if his expectations in this respect had been modified of late, the idea that Jesus, or any one like him, was the Messiah, could not possibly have occurred to him. Lastly, supposing for a moment that Jesus had already determined to take upon himself the task of the Messiah, he had certainly not yet betrayed the intention to any one else, and would never have taken this opportunity of doing so. We should be more disposed to reject the whole scene as unhistorical than to adopt the opinion of the Evangelists concerning it. But the point we have to consider is how far that opinion itself has affected the form in which the question and the answer, especially the former, have come down to us.² It is true that the expression "he that was to come" is very vague. It is never applied in the Old Testament to the Messiah, and may be taken equally well to signify Elijah, for instance, or the prophet who was to restore the sacred objects of a former time.³ In Malachi iii. 1, we should refer it to Yahweh himself, but the rabbis understood it to mean Elijah. Nor is it ever said that the Messiah himself was to give sight to the blind, and so on, though the deliverance from all the spiritual evils thus symbolized was certainly to be a part of the blessedness of the Messianic age. We might therefore suppose, if inclined to draw nice distinctions, that this healing would precede the founding of the kingdom, and prepare the way for it. It seems most probable, therefore, that when John was violently interrupted in his work, he began to think that Jesus would carry it on and actually perform the function of Elijah. His question was, "Are you the man? Is the kingdom of God really close at hand?" And Jesus, perhaps unintentionally, said nothing whatever of himself, but dwelt on his work and its results as the positive proof that the glorious future was indeed at hand. Such a preparation was itself a kind of beginning of the kingdom of heaven; but that kingdom must be established by quiet spiritual regeneration, not by any violent revolution. Did John understand all this? Patience was harder for him to exercise than for any one. But his time of trial would soon end.

Meanwhile, Jesus took this opportunity of speaking of his predecessor to the people. The first Evangelist has collected all the sayings of Jesus about John with which he was

¹ See pp. 102, 109, 110.

² Compare p. 111.

³ Compare pp. 49-51, 98, 99; Matthew xvii. 10-13; John vi. 14.

acquainted, and has strung them together here. He even includes the citation from Malachi and the declaration that John was the Elijah, which Jesus most certainly did not make until some time afterwards, on a very special occasion.¹ When the messengers were gone, Matthew tells us, Jesus began as follows :² “ What was it you went out into the wilderness to see? — was it to see how the wind shakes the bulrush? What was it then? — a man clothed in delicate apparel? Gorgeous robes are worn in princely palaces and not in the wilderness. But what was it that you went to see? — a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. [It is he of whom we read, ‘ Behold, I send my messenger before your face, to prepare the way for you.’] Verily, of all the children of men, no greater one has ever risen than John the Baptist. But the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been besieged, and the violent have striven to take it by storm. For all the prophets and the Law uttered their promises until John, but with him begins the fulfilment. [And if you will receive it as a truth, he is that Elijah who was to come.] He that has ears, let him hear ! ”

In asking what results for our special inquiry these particulars furnish, we need not dwell on the fact that the fame of Jesus had penetrated even to John in his prison, or that his answer to the messengers evinces a joyful consciousness of success. We would rather point to the evidence that the multitudes had streamed out into the wilderness to John, and that ever since an impetuous demand for the kingdom of God had been discernible.³ Not only must this lively interest and passionate longing for salvation stand Jesus in good stead as John’s successor, but it foreshadowed the power which he himself might exercise over the people on his own account.

The statements contained in the Gospels as to the unbounded popularity of Jesus give us less real information than we should at first be inclined to suppose ; partly because they are so vague, partly because many of them are associated with the literal acceptance of miraculous stories, and, since they rest on such misapprehensions on the part of the Evangelists, deserve but little credit. On the other hand, they are so unanimous, and there are so many left unchal-

¹ Matthew xvii. 10–13. See chap. xxvi. p. 325.

² See pp. 98–100, 104, 110–112, 115.

³ Compare Luke vii. 29

lenged, when every fair deduction has been made, that it is impossible to doubt the main fact to which they testify.

Almost from the very first the preaching of Jesus created a deep impression, which was strengthened still further by several cures he performed. Whether his personal appearance contributed to the result it is impossible now to ascertain. His audiences were numerous, and his discourses were received with rapt attention, and greeted with joyous acclamations at their close. The marked contrast between his frank and impressive mode of teaching, his tone of prophetic authority, his entrancing eloquence, on the one hand, and the narrow, timorous, wearisome style of argument adopted by his learned contemporaries on the other, could not fail to excite attention. When he interpreted the prophets, he could make the dead live for his hearers once more as no other could ; and with the fulness of the Holy Spirit in his very tones he made the words of these old seers more glorious than ever they had been, even upon their own lips, and more consoling than they themselves had ever felt them to be. And when he uttered those stories, so full of deep significance, taken from the daily life around him, their simplicity was only equalled by their depth ; and, while they captivated the imagination, they stamped themselves indelibly upon the memory. In a word, he loved and understood the people, and their hearts went out to him. What else could we expect from the quickly moved and excitable disposition of the Galilæans ? When he came to Capernaum, no sooner was it known that he was at home than his house and all the space in front of it were crowded, and he had no time for rest or refreshment. If he walked on the shore of the lake, whole crowds would gradually collect about him till he was forced to look for some special means of addressing them, or they would not be able to hear him. If he crossed the lake, to be alone with his friends, "thousands," as the Gospel says with pardonable exaggeration, would leave their homes and their work and travel miles upon miles to seek him. Wherever he went his fame preceded him. He himself declared that the want of faith in his native place furnished a sad exception to the rule. Now and then the pent-up enthusiasm would find vent in such an exclamation as that of the woman who pronounced his mother blessed. At one time the mothers brought their little ones to receive his blessing ; at another, a man who had not in the least understood him was nevertheless so deeply impressed by his power and his influence upon his hearers that

he determined to take advantage of his moral ascendancy over others for the regulation of his own family affairs. "Master!" said he, "tell my brother to give me my share of the inheritance." Jesus naturally declined to interfere; his task and his qualifications lay in a very different direction. "Man!" he replied, "who has made me a judge or an arbitrator among you?" The incident, however, is a proof of the powerful impression he produced.¹

But it was the subject of his preaching, above all, that secured him a hearing. What he said had always direct or indirect reference to the kingdom of God; and the people listened eagerly, while their hearts drank in the consolation of his promises. How they thought and argued about him! How they fixed on him the hopes he had revived, and wondered what precisely was the part he had to play in preparing for the joyful future which drew nigh!² We shall frequently meet with illustrations of all this as we proceed, and at present need only say that though opinions were from the nature of the case divided; though Jesus often had to encounter unfavorable judgments; though many of the people preferred the old wine to the new, stopped their ears against his preaching, and took offence at his freedom, — yet, on the whole, public opinion declared in his favor; and it was probably owing in large measure to the favorable dispositions of the people that, though beset on many sides in Galilee, he yet retained his freedom unrestrained, and never quite lost his liberty of speech.

And yet, however favorable his reception by the masses might appear, it was very far indeed from satisfying him. We have not forgotten the parable of the sower.³ Now the seed of the word that he scattered was in many cases lost when it might have borne abundant fruit. Nor was this the worst. The number of those whose heart was like the trodden pathway turned out to be great almost beyond the possibility of belief. The favorable impression Jesus made was as superficial as it was general. Nor had the work of John, when narrowly examined, been any richer in results.⁴ But even with this example before him, and with his own profound knowledge of human nature, as shown in the parable of the sower, Jesus was grievously disappointed at last to find how little permanent effect he could produce. The harvest had given such a glorious promise, and had answered it so

¹ Luke xii. 13, 14.

³ See pp. 153, 154.

² Matthew xvi. 13, 14.

⁴ See p. 108.

ill ! His dearest hopes, his most passionate efforts, had been thwarted. The image of the fig-tree gives striking expression to this disappointment when Jesus has reached Jerusalem ; but even before he leaves Galilee we find his high-wrought, long-cherished, bitterly-disappointed expectation bursting forth in a cry of " Woe ! " over the cities of the Galilæan lake. They had been the chief scenes of his labors, and ought to have shown the richest and fairest fruits of his gospel. And Capernaum, distinguished and privileged even above the rest, by being his place of abode, is more bitterly reproached than all for having answered so poorly to its glorious opportunities.

" Woe unto you, Chorazin ! woe unto you, Bethsaida ! for had the mighty works been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth. But I tell you it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you ! And thou, Capernaum ! that art exalted to heaven, thou shalt be brought down into the abyss ! for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which have been done in thee, it would have remained unto this day. But I tell you it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee ! " ¹



CHAPTER XXI.

THE SOURCE OF JESUS' STRENGTH.

MATTHEW VIII. 23-27; XIV. 22-33; LUKE XI. 1-13.²

WE have observed Jesus under the great disappointment of his life ; and we ask involuntarily how it was possible to persevere in spite of the coldness of his relatives and fellow-townsman, the opposition of his devout countrymen, and the shallowness of the multitude ? For, in spite of his extreme sensitiveness and delicacy, he preserved an exalted calmness which was but seldom disturbed, and then only for a moment. He continued his unwearied toil even when it seemed most fruitless. Nay, the more deadly the conflict grew the calmer did he seem to be.

¹ Compare Matthew x. 14, 15.

² Matthew vi. 7-13, vii. 7-11 ; Mark iv. 35-41, vi. 45-52 ; Luke viii. 22-25

It was his trust in God that strengthened him. On Him he threw all care for the result of his efforts and for his own personal fate. We shall not dwell upon this trust in the words of Jesus himself, for we have already done so;¹ but we will give a description of his repose in God, conveyed by the Evangelists in an emblematic account of a voyage across the Lake of Galilee, from Capernaum to the south-east shore : —

It was evening when he embarked, and his disciples followed him. But hardly had they put out when a storm burst upon them, and lashed the waters that were usually so smooth and quiet into fierce turmoil. The wind howled through the tackle, and mocked the utmost strength of the rowers as they toiled to make head against it. The feeble vessel was now reared on high and now buried among the foaming waves that dashed over her deck and gradually filled her, so that she drew heavier and deeper every moment. This could not last much longer. The vessel must inevitably sink. Jesus meanwhile was asleep. At their wits' end, the disciples ran to the stern, where he had stretched himself to rest upon a cushion near the helm, and where the fearful danger had not disturbed the slumbers that succeeded his day's work. They waked him with the cry, "Help, Lord! we are perishing!" "What do you fear?" he said, on waking; "where is your faith?" Then he stood up, gazed out into the storm, and with a gesture of command chid the wind and waves. Then the wind was hushed and the waters stilled, and there was a great calm. Well might they all be lost in wonder! Well might they ask, "What manner of man is this, whom the winds and the sea obey?"

It has been asked whether some fact may not lie at the bottom of this story. It has been suggested, for instance, that when Jesus and his disciples were crossing the lake they were overtaken by a storm, and that the Master's unshaken trust put to shame the terror of the disciples. A similar story is told of Julius Cæsar. Once he had taken ship in disguise to cross the Adriatic Sea, and the helmsman, terrified by the adverse wind, dared not pursue his course. But Cæsar said to him, "Fear not, my friend! you carry Cæsar and his fortunes!" The analogy, however, does not appear to us a happy one; and the whole line of investigation seems fruitless, and even frivolous, — for the original picture was obviously symbolical. Others have found in it a type of the

¹ Compare pp. 151 ff., 168 ff.

Christian Church under the storm of persecution which threatened it with destruction till Christ rescued it. But the Gospels obviously lay the stress upon the circumstance that Jesus was asleep, — that he was absolutely at rest in the midst of such dire agitation and distress. How many storms broke loose upon him in his own personal experiences and the frenzied indignation of others, — in the passionate opposition and the dark schemes of his antagonists ! Yet in the might of his faith in God he maintained his own unruffled serenity, and quieted many a storm which the opposition he met had raised in the bosoms of the terrified disciples.

Now, this trust was sustained and strengthened by prayer. It is only natural that we should have but scanty accounts on this subject ; for prayer belongs essentially to our secret life, and we know that Jesus least of all men could bear that his intercourse with God should be pried into by the eyes of strangers.¹ But still we hear enough to enable us to form some approximate conception of the fact. It is with true perception that our Gospels, especially the third, represent Jesus as praying to God at every crisis of his life, and before every step of special importance. He prays after his baptism, after his first success at Capernaum, before selecting the Twelve, before asking the question which results in his recognition as the Messiah. The symbolical account of the transfiguration represents him as praying ; he has been praying when his disciples ask him to teach them a prayer ; he prays when about to enter on his last sufferings ; and, finally, on the cross itself.²

We have already called attention to this, and we have heard Jesus more than once dwell upon prayer and its efficacy.³ At present we need only call to mind that he appears to have attached little value to prescribed or formal prayer,⁴ and that when he felt the need of turning aside from his active duties to hold communion with God, he loved to be alone, — climbing some hill or seeking out some uninhabited spot (which the Gospels call a “ wilderness ”). If he could find no time in the day, he would steal the hours of the night ; and indeed his heart and head must often have been too full to allow him to sleep. Not that we are to think of him as

¹ Compare p. 222.

² Luke iii. 21, v. 16 (compare Mark i. 35; vi. 46; Matthew xiv. 23), vi. 12, ix. 18, 28, xi. 1, xxii. 41, 42 (Matthew xxvi. 36 ff.; Mark xiv. 32 ff.), xxiii. 34, 46

³ See pp. 138, 182, 191, 193, 194, 196, 222, 223.

⁴ See pp. 140, 180, 250.

speaking to God hour after hour ; for he himself declared that prayers should be short, since they were so apt, if prolonged, to degenerate into mere lip-service. But he looked up to God as he thought over all he had encountered and the work he had to do, considered his line of action and weighed his prospects,—until at last all earthly motives and considerations entirely disappeared, and the Father's will gradually came out more and more clearly as the only test of what must be done and left undone. It was, indeed, familiar intercourse with God, a childlike confidence, in which he poured out all his cares and wishes, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, before God, and from which he never returned without being enlightened, comforted, and strengthened,—in a word, without being heard.

But we are not limited to mere incidental references contained in the words of Jesus and the narratives concerning him ; for he sometimes spoke expressly on the nature of true prayer and the certainty of its being heard. We refer in the first place to the well-known “Lord's Prayer,” which he gave to his disciples as a model. Two of the Evangelists have preserved this prayer ; but the forms in which they give it, and the occasions to which they assign its origin, differ. We value it too highly not to hear them both.

Matthew, then, makes it an example of brevity, and contrasts it with the superstitious practice that he attributes to the heathen, but which was really far more characteristic of the Jews,—of besieging the Deity with endless verbosity and repetition, as if to wear out his patience and compel him to grant the request. According to Jesus this is a gross error. God does not need our prayers to teach him what we require, but we, on our side, do need to pour out our hearts to God.

“When you pray, use no vain repetitions as others do ; for they think that a multitude of words will gain them a hearing. Be not you like them ; for your Father knows what you require before you ask him. Pray, then, after this manner : Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us to-day to-morrow's bread.¹ And forgive us the debt of our trespasses as we too forgive those that have trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but defend us from the Evil One.”²

According to Luke, Jesus had gone apart to pray, and

¹ After an amended version.

² After an amended version.

when he returned, one of his disciples asked him in the name of all the rest to give them a formula of prayer. "Lord! teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." To this Jesus answered, "When you pray, say: Father! Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us, each day, bread for the morrow. And forgive us our trespasses as we too forgive all who have trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation."¹

According to some early authorities the second clause of the prayer, as given by Luke, was not "Thy kingdom come," but "May thy Holy Spirit come upon us to purify us." In any case the original form of this, as well as of the other clauses, appears to be most faithfully preserved in the first Gospel. The "Authorized Version" adds the words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen;" and this conclusion appears in some manuscripts with the omission of "the kingdom" or of "the power and the glory;" but in any case it is not genuine, and only sprang up in the second century, when the prayer began to be used in the assemblies of Christian worshippers. The word *Amen*, that is "Verily," or "So be it," was not used by the Israelites or by the Christians of the apostolic age as a formula for closing a prayer; but when the leader of the devotions had prayed, the congregation would say *Amen!* as a sign that they adopted the prayer and firmly believed that it would be heard.² There is no doubt, then, that this doxology is of later origin; and it is equally certain that the "Lord's Prayer" itself did not come into common use for a considerable time. The disciples understood perfectly well that Jesus did not intend to give them a copy or formula of prayer, but simply to illustrate the dispositions which ought to find expression in their devotions; and though the connection in which the prayer is given by Luke might very easily give rise to misunderstandings, we do not find a single indication throughout the first century of Christianity of its ever having been used as a set formula.

If we go on to ask what the dispositions were which Jesus thought essential to true prayer, we shall find much to reflect upon. To begin with the invocation, "Our Father who art in heaven!" In the first place it enjoins a childlike intercourse with God, simple, natural, easy, and absolutely trust-

¹ After an amended text and version.

² Compare Deuteronomy xxvii. 15-26; 1 Chronicles xvi. 36; Nehemiah viii 6; Psalm cxi. 48; 1 Corinthians xiv. 16.

ful; and at the same time it breathes deep reverence and a sense of awe. And then that “our,” which constantly recurs in the sequel, implies a brotherly love that can ask nothing for itself alone, but must always include others in its prayer, and can never wish to gain any thing at another’s cost. In connection with this thought, and in agreement with other utterances of the Master, the fifth petition insists upon a forgiving disposition as essential to prayer.¹ And Jesus would have us throw even our temporal wants, always restrained within the bounds of moderation, upon God. He would have us, in the strength of prayer, banish all anxiety for the morrow;² but he emphatically requires and assumes that the longing for the establishment of the kingdom of God must be uppermost in the prayerful soul, and so must take the first and the chief place in all communion with God. To Jesus himself, and to all his followers, the fervent longing for the kingdom of God had of course the uncontested precedence of all else. And since this kingdom comes and is extended in proportion as God’s will is obeyed and executed by men with the readiness, the completeness, and the love of angels, and since we know, alas! how far we are from doing the will of God in this spirit, we cannot help turning inward and feeling sadly in the midst of our prayer how weak we are, how sinful we have been, and how pressing is our need of support from on high in our conflict against sin. Truly, whoever has realized the dangers that surround and threaten his moral life will follow the exhortation given by Jesus to his friends in one of the most trying hours of his life, and will pray that he may not enter into temptation; for, however willing our spirit may be, our flesh is miserably weak.³ And so the prayer concludes with the petition that God will preserve us from ever falling into the power of sin.

It has been remarked that several clauses of the “Lord’s Prayer” recur in the same or analogous forms in Jewish prayers of various periods. Jesus never dreamed of expressly avoiding the language of religion familiar to his people and his age; and some of the expressions used in the prayers of the synagogue must have remained in his memory and become endeared to him. It is likely enough, therefore, that he purposely adopted certain current phrases instead of inventing new ones, when his disciples questioned him as to

¹ Compare Mark xi. 25, 26; Matthew v. 23, 24; and pp. 161, 162.

² See p. 169.

³ Matthew xxvi. 41 (Mark xiv. 38, Luke xxii. 46).

the nature of true prayer. But he certainly threw into these old expressions an unsuspected wealth and depth of new meaning ; and he was concerned only with the dispositions of the heart, not the form of their expression. How completely following generations have misunderstood him ! As a rule they have troubled themselves but little as to the spirit of the " Lord's Prayer," and throughout the ages the words have been committed to memory by millions, and thoughtlessly muttered over and over again in endless repetition ! The reformer Luther might well say that there never had been such a martyr as the " Lord's Prayer " !

We need not insist upon the light which this short prayer throws upon the inner life of Jesus, especially in his hours of prayer, or upon all his intercourse with God. This must be obvious to every one. But it may be necessary to insist that unless we are in sympathy with that inner life itself, and have in some measure appropriated its spirit, it is utterly impossible for us to understand the Master's certainty that every prayer is heard, or to know what we are doing when we attempt to judge of its truth. If we entirely misunderstand and disobey the Master we shall, of course, fail to realize the blessings which he experienced himself and promised to all his disciples from prayer.

" Ask in prayer and it shall be given you ; seek and you shall find ; knock and it shall be opened to you. For every one who asks in prayer receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it is opened."

The rising intensity, the repetition, and the solemn asseveration of these words are enough to convince us that Jesus was not only free himself from every shadow of doubt that prayers are answered, but also desired to remove such doubts, once for all, from the minds of others. He tried, accordingly, to expose the absurdity of all doubt, and the unworthiness of all lack of perfect trust, by an analogy taken from daily life : —

" Would any one of you give his son a stone, if he asked him for a cake of bread ; or a serpent, if he asked him for a fish ? And if even you, whose very love is selfishness in comparison with the Highest love, if even you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those that ask him ! "

We may safely say that Jesus spoke thus from his own experience. Not that every one of the wishes he had laid be-

fore God had been fulfilled. Far indeed was this from being the case ! But though he did not always receive exactly what he asked for, he had never prayed in vain. Otherwise he could never have borne up so bravely and accomplished so much when almost utterly bereft of human support, persevered under such cruel misconception and opposition, retained his zeal under every kind of disappointment, held his own in every conflict, and accomplished the task of his life. He had reason, then, for his absolute faith in the power of prayer ;¹ and with reference to the spiritual gifts which man implores from God, he supplemented his paradox on the power of faith by the words : " Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have it, as it were, already, and it will be given you ;" or, as another Gospel expresses it : " Whatsoever you ask in faith, you shall receive." ²

It is of less consequence, though worthy of a passing notice, that Luke again departs further than the first Evangelist from the original words of the Master's reasoning, which is what the logicians call an argument *a fortiori*. He adds a third instance : " Which of you would give his son a scorpion if he asked him for an egg ? " This example is not so well chosen as the others ; for it might be possible to palm off a stone for one of the hard, flat, round cakes of bread common in the East, and a serpent might perhaps pass for a dried fish, but a scorpion could not well be mistaken for an egg. Luke also specifies the Holy Spirit as the " good gift " which God will give. This is an explanation of the Master's saying in the spirit of Paul. Finally, he tries to show by another example from daily life, in this case a special incident, that even men generally comply with a request at last, though it involves some trouble ; how much less will God refuse !

Suppose, he says, you have received an unexpected visit from a friend who is on a journey, and has come upon you in the middle of the night. He is hungry, but you happen to have nothing in the house. What is to be done ? The shops have long been shut, but you have a neighbor with whom you are on friendly terms ; so, in spite of the unseasonable hour, you put a bold face on it and knock at his door. " Who is there ? " he cries, as soon as the noise has waked him. Then you begin to beg him to help you out of your difficulty. " My dear friend," you say, " do lend me a few cakes of bread ; for an acquaintance of mine who is travelling this way has

¹ Matthew xxvi. 53.

² Mark xi. 24 (Matthew xxi. 22); compare pp. 194, 195, and James i. 5, 6.

just come to my house, and I have nothing to offer him." But the other answers peevishly, and without coming down, "Leave me alone! The house is locked up, and the children are asleep with me. How can I get up to find the bread and unbolt the door?" And yet I tell you he will do it, if not for friendship's sake, yet to satisfy the importunity that has disturbed his rest. For one reason or another he will put on his clothes and give you what you want. Do you think, then, that God will let you supplicate him in vain?

There is something that shocks our sense of reverence in the application of such incidents of human life to God, and we never meet with any thing of the kind in the parables of undoubted authenticity. The same characteristics, however, reappear in several stories in the third Gospel, none of which, we have reason to believe, are genuine. We are therefore amply justified in questioning the authenticity of this description also. At any rate, we know already that Jesus did not really regard the efficacy of prayer as dependent on divine caprice, which must be wearied or forced into compliance. His experience taught him that the heavenly Father *cannot* allow the children who lay their spiritual wants before him to suffer need.

It was prayer, then, that gave Jesus strength; prayer that kept his trust in God, his hope and his courage from fading away, that preserved him from ever failing in self-surrender, obedience, or love. Communion with God gave him all the strength he needed to persevere in his unwearied labors, watchfully to maintain the struggle, to make all things, even the keenest sufferings, minister to the development and hallowing of his character. The whole course of his life, and above all his death, proves that this was so.

Prayer strengthened him for all things, and made him, when surrounded by dangers on every side, a perfect type of the tranquil power of faith. This conception is visibly set before us in an emblematic story, which so strongly resembles that of the storm at sea with which we began this chapter that it might almost be regarded as a later modification or elaboration of it. Nevertheless, it has a sufficiently strongly marked character of its own to deserve a special treatment. In the Gospels it follows immediately after the feeding of the five thousand.

Jesus, with the most limited possible means at his command, had abundantly satisfied the wants of countless multitudes.¹

¹ See pp. 148, 149.

Immediately afterwards he commanded his disciples, who would rather have stayed with him, to embark alone and cross the lake. He would presently join them himself, but must first dismiss the crowd. As soon as he had done so, he went up the mountain to pray. He felt that he must be alone with God. It is an eloquent touch in the story, that shows us how even Jesus, who was so rich that he could give food to all that multitude, yet felt poor and helpless before God, and could do nothing without prayer! But what that prayer could enable him to do the sequel will declare.

The shades of night had fallen upon the lake, in the midst of which were the disciples in their boat, while Jesus alone was on the land. He saw them from the hill, struggling in vain to make head against the strong west wind, while the mighty waves tortured and wrenched the vessel. Upon this he came to them, walking upon the water, about the fourth watch of the night (from three to six in the morning). He was on the point of passing them by (?) when they saw him walking upon the sea, and thinking it was a ghost, were terrified and shrieked for fear. But Jesus said at once, "Be of good courage! It is I. Fear not!" Then he got up into the boat, and the wind was hushed. In their own minds they were all filled with consternation, for their shallow hearts had not understood their Master's power, even when he fed the crowd miraculously.

If the story went no further it might be supposed really to refer to the Christian community rather than to Jesus himself.¹ Bereft of his personal presence, given over to the world's hostility, the flock of Jesus looked forward through the night of persecution to his return, of which no man knew the hour,² — it might be in the first, the second, the third, or not till the fourth watch of the night!³ Or when not looking for his immediate return, the followers of Jesus at least expected his might to interpose on their behalf, and if he was with them, or lent them his help, they would at once be saved from their distress. Perhaps this is the meaning of the story in Mark, or his authority. But the first Gospel gives us a different impression, and has, we are inclined to think, preserved the original meaning more faithfully. Here another figure appears upon the canvas, probably painted in by a later hand, and removes the possibility of doubt as to the meaning of the picture. When Jesus had striven to calm his

¹ See p. 260.

² Matthew xxiv. 42, xxv. 13.

³ Compare Mark vi. 47, 48 with Mark xiii. 35.

terrified disciples, Peter, says the Gospel of Matthew, cried out from the ship, "Lord! if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." "Come then!" answered Jesus. Then Peter dropped from the ship and began to walk upon the water to him. But when he saw how the fierce gusts of wind were lashing the waves he was afraid, and immediately began to sink. "Lord! help me!" he cried in terror, and Jesus put out his hand and seized him, with the words of gentle but serious rebuke, "Why did you doubt, O you of little faith?" As soon as they had ascended the boat the wind was hushed, and the men bowed down before Jesus and confessed, "Truly thou art the son of God!"

The picture is now as clear as we could wish. Jesus, in the might of prayer, walks calmly through the storm on the raging billows of the world.¹ But his disciples, though their danger is far less than his, are beside themselves with fear. There is but one of them who has a moment's courage, and even his heart sinks almost directly. But for the delivering hand of Jesus² he would perish. He lacks the mighty faith which makes all things possible to Jesus.³

It almost seems as if the three pictures of the Master himself, of the disciples, and of Peter must be meant to refer to the events of the last evening of the life of Jesus. But apart from personal references the story of the walking on the sea is a masterpiece. An art-critic of the highest rank⁴ has assigned it a place of honor among legends that excel in beauty and depth of meaning; for it puts, as it were, before our very eyes this weighty truth: Man can overcome the extremest difficulties and obstacles in the fulfilment of his task so long as he is supported by the ever fresh courage of faith, but no sooner does the smallest fear creep over him than he is lost.

No man has ever exemplified this power of faith more strikingly than Jesus.

Compare Job ix. 8; Daniel vii. 2; Revelation xiii. 1.

² Compare Luke xxii. 32.

³ Compare Matthew xvii. 20.

⁴ Goethe.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GATHERING STORM.

MATTHEW XIV. 1-13*a*, xv. 1-20; LUKE XIII. 31-33.¹

WITHIN a few months, at most, after the commencement of the ministry of Jesus, clouds had already begun to appear on the horizon ; but they had gradually risen in greater number, and were now gathering darkly over the Master's head. If the Evangelists had strictly followed the order of time in their narratives, the whole course of events would be clear to us, and we should understand how the relations between Jesus and the established powers became more and more strained, and the opposition to him grew in intensity. Even as it is, though our authorities often arrange their materials with reference to the subject-matter rather than the sequence of time, we may still follow the course of events with tolerable certainty ; but to do so we must set aside certain isolated and incorrect statements to the effect that the enemies of Jesus had laid plots to get him out of the way, even at an early period.² Our general impression, then, is that after Jesus had been at work for perhaps something less than a year, the storm began to gather from two quarters. The friendly disposition or complete indifference with which the popular leader of Nazareth and the new Messianic movement in Galilee were at first regarded now gave way to a hostile and even definitely aggressive line of conduct, in which it appears that the civil as well as the religious authorities took part.

Let us begin with an event which must have moved Jesus deeply, both on its own account and as an omen of the fate he had to expect himself. This event was the death of John. The account we have of it runs as follows : —

The prophet of the wilderness paid, by the loss of his liberty, for his boldness in rebuking the tetrarch's marriage with his half-brother's wife.³ The only reason why he was not put to death at once was that Herod shrank from exasperating the multitudes too much, and they revered John as a

¹ Mark vi. 14-29, vii. 1-23 ; Luke ix. 7-9.² Mark iii. 6 (Matthew xii. 14).³ See pp. 122, 123.

prophet. According to other authorities Herodias desired the prophet's death, but her husband protected him ; for once he had summoned him into his presence and had received so strong an impression of his uprightness and sanctity that he had ever since entertained a feeling of awe towards him, and had protected him from every injury. In fact, although the prophet's exhortations always threw him into great dejection and perplexity, he could not help sending for him repeatedly. All this did but confirm Herodias in her murderous design, for the implacable hatred of the offended woman was still further heightened by fear for her own future when she saw what a hold the prophet was evidently gaining upon the prince himself.

At last her opportunity came. It was Herod's birthday, or perhaps the anniversary of his accession to the throne. The grandes of the kingdom, the captains of the army, and the heads of the most distinguished families were invited to court to give lustre to the feast. The splendor displayed was dazzling ; the pleasures offered to the distinguished guests overpowered the senses ; boundless prodigality and entrancing luxury reigned supreme. Herodias had prepared a surprise for the guests. The feast was far advanced when Herod's step-daughter was announced. As soon as she was admitted, she begged her prince and step-father to allow her to dance for the entertainment of his guests. Could a princess deign to display herself like a common dancing-girl before so many unchaste eyes ? Had she no motive but affectionate attention to the founder of the feast ? Herod had no suspicion, and readily accepted her offer. Then Salome, for so the girl was called, began. She threw herself into every bewitching attitude or movement which the very perfection of art admitted ; and as her lovely form glanced or floated before their eyes, the spectators were so enraptured by her grace that they all gazed upon her in speechless admiration, till a great burst of applause greeted the close of her performance. Herod himself was transported with delight, and signified his pleasure by a promise of princely magnificence : " Ask what you will, and you shall have it." And when she seemed at first to decline any recompense, he repeated with a mighty oath, " Name your boon ! for it shall be granted, though it were half my kingdom !" " Then bring me the head of John the Baptist here on a salver !" she cried, for her mother had taught her her lesson well. Herod was thunderstruck by the request ; but, however deeply moved, he dare not break the

oath that he had sworn, especially in the presence of all his guests. So he gave the murderous command against which his heart revolted. A guard was instantly despatched to the prison, where he did the wretched deed ; and immediately the prophet's severed head was brought to the princess on a salver. She took it, and, thanking the prince for his favor, retired to bear the reward of her art to her mother. Herodias was avenged, and could now rest in peace.

When the disciples of John heard of their master's fatal end, they begged for the body, and gave it an honorable burial. Then they went to Jesus and told him all that had occurred, upon which he left his work for a little while, took ship, and retired to a solitary place on the other side of the lake.

Not long afterwards the name of Jesus happened to be mentioned in connection with that of his predecessor at Herod's court. At that time divers opinions concerning him prevailed among the mass of his followers ; some held him to be Elijah, and others some one of the old prophets. But when his fame reached Herod, the monarch's conscience smote him heavily, and he said to his courtiers, "I believe he is John the Baptist himself, whom I beheaded ! He is risen from the realms of death, and that is why he has such wondrous powers." So he longed for an opportunity of seeing him. He would have one soon.

This eminently dramatic story certainly cannot be accepted as it stands. It betrays too much art in its striking contrasts between the manners of the court and the person of the prophet. We have already seen that the occasion of John's imprisonment is not correctly given by the Gospels. That such a man as Herod "delighted in hearing" John is, to say the least, an exaggeration. The ghastly scene in which the prophet's head is carried into the festive hall may not be quite impossible in such an age and at such a court, but it is hardly probable. It is easy to see that Herodias is drawn after the model of Ahab's wife, who hated and persecuted the first Elijah ;¹ and Salome is evidently copied from Esther, for she, too, visits the prince by surprise, captivates him by her beauty, obtains a promise of any thing up to the half of his kingdom, and at the festive board demands the death of her enemy as the royal boon.² Finally, the real Salome was no longer a girl at this period, but the wife, if not the widow, of the tetrarch Philip ;³ so that the dance at least is unhistorical

¹ 1 Kings xix. 2, xxi. 25.

² Esther v. 2, 3, 6, vii. 2.

³ See p. 4.

Is the whole story a pure fiction then? That would be too much to assert. We must certainly accept it as a fact that John remained some time in prison.¹ Nor is it improbable that a woman's hatred contributed to his fall, for shortly afterwards, when Herod was defeated in battle by the insulted father of his former wife, whom he had rejected in favor of Herodias, the populace connected his disaster with the murder of John. This would be all the more natural if Herodias had been the cause of her husband's crime as well as of his disaster.² It is impossible to doubt that Herod heard of Jesus, and there is nothing in itself improbable in the question of his troubled soul, especially as given by Luke: "I have beheaded John,— who can this man be of whom I hear such things?" The only difficulty is that one does not quite see how the disciples were to know what Herod had said on the subject. Finally, a later tradition says that Herodias secretly buried the head in the court of the castle, and cast out the trunk with ignominy; but we have no reason to suspect the statement that the disciples of John buried their master's body and brought the tidings to Jesus, who immediately crossed the lake.

We need not stay to ask whether in crossing the Sea of Gennesareth Jesus was flying from Herod; whether, at any rate, he thought it best to leave the territory of Antipas for a time, and put himself out of reach of any attack or persecution. Without recourse to such a supposition, we can well believe that on hearing of the death of his predecessor, whom he honored so deeply, he felt that he must retire into solitude to reflect upon an event which had so greatly shocked him. Was that the earthly reward of one who had consecrated his undivided heart to God's kingdom, and had been the greatest of his messengers? Jesus had often heard and read of the persecutions to which the prophets were exposed of old, but it was a very different thing to be the witness of such events himself. Moreover, this John had not contented himself with simply preaching the near approach of God's kingdom,— he had, at the divine behest, put his own hand to the work to hasten its approach. What a bitter disappointment that he should fall by the headsman's sword before the promise was fulfilled! . . . It was all an enigma; and though Jesus never doubted for a moment in the truth of God's promises and the approach of the great deliverance, he could no longer

¹ See pp. 253 ff.

² See pp. 108, 123.

guess what ways or methods God would choose to bring these things to pass. Might not such a fate as John's be hanging over his own head? Was it not at least possible that he too must fall in the good cause? Might not the opposition which was ever growing in intensity at last end in his death? And if it should appear that such was indeed God's will, what did it mean? Why had John fallen? How could his own destruction ever help the coming of God's kingdom? Could it be possible that this sacrifice was in some way needed to secure the triumph of his gospel? . . .

Such thoughts, we may suppose, took possession of Jesus as he wandered in the solitary regions on the north-east shore of the lake. He certainly came to no hasty or sudden conclusion, but these gloomy hours or days of contemplation bore rich fruit. The captivity of the Baptist had been the signal for Jesus to begin his work, and his death appears to have marked a crisis in his spiritual growth. For we know that as during the Baptist's life he had closely connected the reception accorded to him with that which he had received himself,¹ so after his death he saw his own future lot foreshadowed in that which had overtaken his predecessor. Thus he declared to his friends, "They have done what they would to John, and so shall I be handled by them also."² We are, therefore, not surprised to find him henceforth adopting a different tone and looking at every thing with different eyes from before. He watched every unfavorable indication more narrowly than ever, and gradually accustomed himself to contemplate the possibility of his being rejected. In connection herewith, as we shall see, his attitude towards the multitude, towards their leaders, and towards the established authorities underwent a change; he began to regard his own task, and even himself, in a new light, and all his plans came to maturity.

There had been a time when far other thoughts as to his own lot, the result of his efforts, and the future in general had occupied his breast. He had entered upon his career joyously, and with the brightest hopes for his people. All things seemed to smile upon him then. What a change had taken place!

It was not long before it came to the ears of Jesus that his predecessor's murderer, who was not in the habit of troubling himself much about popular Jewish teachers, had been

¹ See p. 253; compare Matthew xxi. 24-27.

² Matthew xvii. 12.

alarmed by the reputation he had acquired, and had begun to watch his movements with no friendly eye. He came to hear of it in this way :—

A short time, it seems, before he set out for the City of the Temple certain Pharisees came to him and said, “ Make ready to depart, for Herod intends to kill you.” It would seem from the conduct of Jesus, and the judgment he passed on their words, that these Pharisees stood in some closer connection with Herod than they cared to allow ; but his answer has certainly not come down to us in its original form. “ Go,” he is reported to have said, “ Go and say to that fox in my name, ‘ Behold ! to-day and to-morrow I expel demons and perform cures, and the day after I have done. And yet to-day and to-morrow and the day after I must journey, for it cannot be that a prophet should die elsewhere than in Jerusalem.’ ” All this is very obscure, if not contradictory. The beginning of the speech implies that casting out devils and healing the sick was the regular work of the Master’s life from day to day. The words must certainly have been tampered with. Again, the conclusion is in direct contradiction with the fact that John had just perished away from Jerusalem. It appears most probable that the execution of John had caused so much indignation that Herod dared not further exasperate the people by laying hands on Jesus, and yet that he feared some serious disturbance might be the result of his preaching of the Messianic kingdom. Under these circumstances, it would seem, he tried to drive him out of his dominions by threats, and concerted measures for the purpose with the Pharisees. Jesus saw through the plot, which he denounced as a fox’s trick, and declared that for the present (“ to-day, to-morrow, and the next day” is a proverbial expression for any short period) he should pursue his work fearlessly ; but he added that he should soon set out for Jerusalem, not in fear of Herod, but because he must await the result of his labors — that result that would so probably be fatal — at Jerusalem, and not in Galilee.

His prospects were indeed as dark as he had painted them.

The storm that rose from the South was at least as dangerous as the other. The fact was, that the ecclesiastical authorities had also come to the conclusion that they must take some definite steps against the Galilæan teacher of the people. Jesus had often shown, by his intercourse with sinners and his labors on the Sabbath day, that he thought the claims

of humanity more important than the precepts of the Law and the tradition; and on these occasions he had always found that certain Pharisees were ready with their censures. But now the whole party—whose true home was the City of the Temple, the headquarters of Jewish theology and the hot-bed of extreme orthodoxy—entered the field against him, and the consequence was an avowed and definite rupture.

Such, at least, appears to be the meaning of an encounter between Jesus and certain Scribes. Some time after the death of John (the accounts of a similar measure at an earlier period deserve no credit¹), some Pharisees who belonged to the class of Scribes came expressly from Jerusalem to the land of Gennesareth and attached themselves to Jesus, in order that they might have the opportunity of judging for themselves of his teaching and his conduct, and might act accordingly. These men, perhaps, were not exactly sent officially to Galilee, but it certainly was not solely at their own instance that they made the journey. The fact was, that so many unsettling reports had reached Jerusalem as to the contempt for the Law shown by this teacher of Nazareth, whom so many of the people followed, that the Pharisaic party, or its leaders, did not think it prudent to remain passive any longer. Some of their number, therefore, came to Galilee, where they soon made themselves fully acquainted with the position of affairs, and deliberately chose their point of attack. “Why,” they asked severely, “do your followers transgress the tradition of the elders in not washing their hands before they eat?”

This was a test question, and we must try to understand its bearing. It was not a mere casual omission that was condemned, as Mark would make it appear.² A great principle was at stake. The Pharisees accused Jesus of despising the “oral law” in a matter of extreme importance. The tradition of the *elders*, or generations of old, had just as absolute authority with the Pharisees as the written law of Moses itself. Indeed, they believed that this tradition had been given by the Lord to Moses on Mount Sinai; that he had communicated it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, from whom it had been received by the prophets, who handed it down in their turn from generation to generation, until they

¹ Luke v. 17 (compare Matthew ix. 1 ff., Mark ii. 1 ff.); and Mark iii. 22 (compare Matthew xii. 24. See also p. 134, and chap. viii. p. 576).

² Mark vii. 2, 5.

committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue to be finally preserved and promulgated by the schools of theology and their leaders. On this account the leaders in question sometimes enjoyed more respect from the masses than did the high priest himself. Indeed, since the written law was in a certain sense within the reach of every one, and the oral tradition could only be brought to the knowledge of the people by the teaching of the Scribes, these champions of religion were naturally disposed to attach the highest value to the sacred treasure of which they were the special guardians, and ventured to assert, with an appeal to Moses himself,¹ that "the words of the Scribes were weightier than the words of the Law."

As to the special point of washing hands before and particularly after a meal, it was said that the precept had passed into forgetfulness, but that Hillel and Shammai revived it and taught that it was absolutely binding. We read of a certain Rabbi Eleazar who was banished by the Sanhedrim for neglecting this sacred institution, the sentence remaining in force even after his death. Of course the object of these regulations was not to secure cleanliness, but to guard against ceremonial impurities. Indeed, precautions of this kind made up the substance of Jewish religion, whether interpreted by the Sadducees who held that the priests were more especially bound to preserve their sacred persons from impurity, or by the Pharisees who taught all the people of the Lord to take the same precautions. The dread of becoming unclean without intending it, especially by unwittingly using natural produce from which no tithes had been paid, had contributed powerfully to the formation of the Pharisaic party. On returning from the market it was necessary to take a bath before eating any thing, for who could tell with how many unclean persons he might have come into contact? Cups, cans, brazen-ware, and even bedsteads required frequent washing for fear they might accidentally become unclean. Nor was all this, together with careful washing of the hands before every meal, left to the discretion of each individual; for the commandment was absolute. We may see how miserably trivial the tradition on this point became by consulting the Mishna, the oldest and most important part of the Talmud. The Mishna is divided into six books, and the whole of one of them treats with incredible minuteness of "purifications." There are a hundred and twenty-six chapters in it, four of which are specially devoted to the washing of hands before

¹ Deuteronomy iv. 14, xvii. 10.

meat. The discussion ran on such questions as whether the hands were to be held up or down, and whether the fingers only, the whole hand, or the arm up to the elbow must be made wet. A later Jewish treatise contains twenty-six directions for this ceremony.

It appears, therefore, that the point upon which Jesus was attacked was far from unimportant. Religion itself was at stake! How did he defend himself? By a counter attack of crushing violence! There is a tone of long-suppressed indignation, one would say, in the answer which he instantly made : “ If you speak of transgression, why do you transgress God’s law for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘ Honor your father and mother ! ’ and, ‘ He who curses his father or mother, let him perish and find no mercy ! ’ But you say : If a man says to his father or mother, Whatever I should naturally have devoted to your support is *corban* (that is, dedicated to the temple), he is bound by his vow. You will not allow him to support his parents any longer, if he has vowed his money to the temple. Thus have you disarmed the law of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites ! How truly does that saying of the prophet Isaiah fit you : ‘ This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me ! In vain do they seek to honor me by stamping precepts on the people’s heart, which are but commandments of men.’ ”

This answer put an end to the discussion. A haughty silence was the only possible reply to such an onslaught. The faithful guardians of the tradition had not come all the way from Jerusalem to be put on their own defence ! And if they had any other complaints, difficulties, or questions in store, they might well be content without stating them, for the Nazarene’s declaration had been as frank and decisive as could possibly be desired. They knew all they wanted to know already, and perhaps more. The narrative seems to indicate that Jesus himself was now convinced that he had nothing more to hope from the Scribes or from the Pharisees in general ; that a reconciliation was impossible, and that the only appeal lay to the general public. At least, we read that he now summoned the multitude and cried emphatically, “ Listen to me all of you, and understand my words ! It is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth ! ” His words were few, but there was matter enough for thought in them. When he was alone with his disciples again, Peter said to him, “ Explain this

saying to us ! ” “ What ! ” he cried, “ are even you so dull of comprehension still ? Do you not understand that whatever goes in at the mouth drops into the belly, and is there separated and cast away ? But what comes out of the mouth is from the heart, and that defiles a man. For from the heart come such evil thoughts as murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, evil speaking against holy things. That s what defiles a man.”

So Jesus said ; but the second Evangelist makes him add the very gratuitous explanation that the reason why nothing which comes from outside can defile a man is that it does not go into his heart but into his stomach. The first Evangelist, too, misses the far-reaching consequences of the saying, and limits its application by the closing words : “ But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” There was little ambiguity, however, in the words that Jesus used to the multitude and to his friends, or in the manly utterances that preceded them. They were an open declaration of war, not only upon such individuals as covered the lack of true piety in their hearts by strict compliance with the external ordinances of religion, or the schools which favored such hypocrisy, but on the Jewish conception of religion generally. Surely no less than this was involved in his declaration that nothing external can make a man unclean in the sight of God ; in his passionate denunciation of the doctrine that so-called duties to God (in point of fact, duties to the temple and the priests) transcend all others ; that money once set aside for sacred purposes must under no pretence be applied to secular objects ; that a son was at liberty, — nay, when once he had made the vow, was irrevocably bound — to let his parents suffer want in favor of the temple ! “ A noble way,” Mark makes him cry to the Scribes, — “ A noble way, in truth, of mocking the law of God to maintain your own tradition, — and this is only one example out of many ! ” There is something in the style in which he speaks of “ *your* ” tradition, as though it were totally external to himself ; something in his choice of an example that had filled him with the utmost indignation and appeared to him so absolutely conclusive ; something in his application to the pious Jews before him of Isaiah’s stern rebuke, — that makes us ask whether he had not been goaded and exasperated already by events of which we have no record. At any rate, when his disciples came to him afterwards, and asked him with some trepidation, “ Do you know how indignant the

Pharisees were when they heard what you said?" he answered, almost contemptuously, that since the Pharisaic school was not of God, it would soon meet its ruin: "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Let them be! They are blind leaders of the blind. If a blind man chooses a blind guide, they will both fall into the gutter!"

But it may still be asked whether it was not the oral law alone with which Jesus had broken, and which he declared to consist of mere "commandments of men;" whether he did not still acknowledge the divine authority of the Mosaic or written law,—especially as he cites the fifth of the Ten Commandments as the word of God? But observe! Jesus proclaimed and applied the principle that the religious life cannot be polluted except by the moral uncleanness which a man brings upon himself. He was evidently quite aware of the far-reaching consequences of this principle, and its flat contradiction of the Jewish religion. He knew perfectly well that the various laws as to clean and unclean food were contained in the books of Moses; he knew that they were dear and sacred to the heart of the Jews (witness their conduct under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes),—and yet he fixed upon these very laws, together with the innumerable regulations as to cleanliness and purifications, as to sacrifices and vows; and if he did not absolutely annul them, he yet roundly declared that they have no binding force and no intrinsic value. All this proves beyond dispute that he attributed divine authority to the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother;" not because it was contained and enforced in the twentieth and twenty-first chapters of Exodus, but because the moral sense of man confirms it without appeal. The supremacy, then, not only of the tradition, but of the Law itself, he unhesitatingly rejects.

But Jesus did not rashly hurry his followers into every possible deduction that could be made from his principle. With perfect tact he confined himself in his controversy with the Scribes to one striking example, and, in his appeal to the multitude and his own disciples, kept to the subject then in hand. But he did not mean to let the matter rest here. This deliberate and emphatic appeal from the pious leaders to the people themselves had a double motive. In the first place, Jesus was now convinced that nothing could be done with these leaders, and that he must leave them to take their own course, whereas he still hoped better things from the

people's sense of truth ; but, in the second and principal place, he saw how the masses were bowed down beneath the weight of the regulations forced upon them on pain of incurring the wrath of God, so numerous that it was next to impossible to observe them all ! He saw how hard, how very hard, this was upon them ; saw that it was a yoke they could not bear.¹ In direct antagonism to the Scribes, therefore, and in the hope of rescuing his fellow-countrymen altogether from the influence of the Pharisees, he gave more prominence to his own person henceforth than he had done hitherto. He had already absolved the multitude from the duty of blind obedience to the laws that related to food and ceremonial purity, and not long afterwards he invited them in more general terms to exchange the principles of the Pharisees for his : " Come unto me all you that are wearied and heavy laden, and I will give you rest ! Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart ; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."² Nor did he shrink from chastising that spiritual pride which is fostered by a hard and formal religion. " You are the men," he said to the Pharisees, " who pass yourselves for righteous in human eyes, but God sees into your hearts ; and what is exalted by men is an abomination to God."³ Finally, he gave his followers the emphatic warning : " Beware of the Pharisaic leaven ! "⁴

So the relations between Jesus and the Pharisees had long been growing sharper and more strained, and after this open rupture the breach between them could never be closed again. The contest now begun could end only with the absolute defeat of one or other of the two parties. It was a struggle for life and death.

After this momentous encounter, we are told that Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre ; that is to say, to the boundaries, perhaps even beyond them, of Phœnicia.⁵ If this statement is trustworthy, we may certainly connect the journey with the controversy that preceded it, and may suppose that after his collision with the Pharisees Jesus deemed it advisable to retire beyond the reach of his adversaries for a time. Since it was not his intention to preach in Phœnicia,

¹ Compare Acts xv. 10-19 ; Colossians ii. 20-22.

² Matthew xi. 28-30.

³ Luke xvi. 15.

⁴ Matthew xvi. 6 (Mark viii. 15; Luke xii. 1).

⁵ Mark vii. 24 (Matthew xv. 21).

he would hardly have made a rather difficult expedition of two short days' journey, unless he had had some strong reason for it. How long he stayed in the neighborhood of Tyre we are not told. Mark makes him journey still farther north, through the district of Sidon, and then turn south-east to the lake of Galilee, pass some way down its eastern shore apparently, and finally take ship and cross in a south-west-erly direction to Dalmanutha, where we meet him once again.¹ But the Evangelist's geography is open to suspicion, and we are inclined to lay these apparently purposeless wanderings of Jesus to the account of Mark's want of accuracy. At any rate, Matthew does not make him go either so far north or so far east, but represents him far more simply as returning from the boundaries of Phœnicia to the lake, and then crossing over to the neighborhood of Magdala.²

But did he really retreat at all? A similar step is mentioned earlier, after an account of his violating the Sabbath. But this is only in one of the Gospels, and the connection in which it occurs throws suspicion on it.³ It is at any rate worthy of notice that Jesus is said to have retired or fled on several similar occasions. When he heard that John was murdered he crossed the lake. After his dispute with the Pharisees about cleanness he went to Phœnicia; and presently, after another hostile encounter with the Pharisees, he crosses to the north-eastern shore and passes through Bethsaida to Cæsarea Philippi. Thus we find him repeatedly retiring to a place of safety, and quitting the scene of conflict just when appearances are most threatening. If we may add the earlier voyage to the land of the Gadarenes, then we have four of these special journeys unconnected with missionary labors,—two of them south and north across the lake, and two to the extreme north of the country, east and west. This is a very curious illustration of the growing difficulty of his position, and a proof that even if no overwhelming reasons had soon compelled him to set out for Jerusalem, he could hardly have quietly continued his work in Galilee. He had, in fact, no choice.

But is it possible that Jesus fled? Was it in keeping with his character or consistent with his dignity to do so? Not if he was really the wonder-worker that the Gospels say he was; nor yet if he followed the prophets, as some people seem to think he did, in cherishing and recommending a trust in God

¹ Mark vii. 31, viii. 10.

² Matthew xv. 29, 39.

³ Matthew xii. 15; compare Mark iii. 7.

which is fatal to all self-help and foresight, in leaving every thing to God and resting passively and blindly in his will and pleasure revealed by chance events ! But Jesus was not a man of this stamp. His religious belief, that all things were ordained by Providence, had no injurious effect whatever on his moral perceptions ; and he by no means felt absolved from the duty of self-preservation or from obedience to the moral law, that commands us to protect our lives as long as it is in our power to do so. Jesus knew that to lose his life was to save it ; but that was only if conscience and the good cause require him to " hate " his life, and if he could only preserve it by forsaking his duty, — by falsehood and unfaithfulness. There was a difference between sacrificing his life and wantonly squandering and despising it. *Jesus was no fanatic.* Afterwards he came to see that the conflict must in all probability result in his destruction, but at present this seemed far from certain ; and even when he saw that the catastrophe was almost inevitable, he still took every possible precaution that prudence could suggest, that he might have no cause to reproach himself. Again, at the time of which we are now speaking, — that is to say, during the last few months of his Galilæan ministry, — he had not yet fulfilled the task for which he felt himself to be personally responsible. The training of his disciples, to which he had been able to give too little time as yet, lay upon his heart, and he must of necessity make an appeal to the nation at large ; nor could this appeal be made anywhere but at Jerusalem. He had abundant reason, then, for not throwing his life away.

There is, however, a more valid objection to the truth of these accounts, and we have therefore expressed ourselves with hesitation. Two of the journeys, those to Gadara and Tyre, both of them places inhabited by heathen, are made the occasion of events which are entirely unhistorical, — mere emblematic representations of the position of affairs in the apostolic age. The other two journeys — the one that followed the death of John, and the one to Cæsarea Philippi — are certainly historical ; but in both these cases the desire to be alone with his disciples was a subsidiary, if not the primary, motive in the mind of Jesus. On the other hand, it does not follow that because the accounts of what took place on two of the journeys are incredible, the journeys themselves were never made ; whereas the very desire to be alone with the Twelve for so long a time and at so great a distance is itself exceedingly significant. We may, therefore, adopt the con-

clusion with some confidence, that the work of Jesus assumed a new aspect during the last period of his stay in the regions of Galilee. He no longer appeared regularly in public, for he was constantly beset by his opponents. His previous journeys, generally short ones, had no other object than to enable him to preach the gospel of the kingdom at different places, but henceforth he repeatedly withdrew altogether, and for a time desisted from preaching. He seldom appeared in Capernaum, never stayed there long, and — this can hardly be an accident — never again, so far as we know, taught in a synagogue. Henceforth he was much alone with his trusted friends till he set out for Jerusalem. It soon became clear that the end of his Galilæan ministry, and with it the decision of the conflict he had entered upon and the fate that awaited him, was approaching with rapid steps.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JEWISH THIRST FOR THE MARVELLOUS.

LUKE XVII. 20, 21 ; MATTHEW XVI. 1-3 ; MARK VIII. 11-13.¹

WE have seen the various powers in Israel adopt a threatening attitude towards Jesus, and have noticed the consequent modification in his line of action ; but we cannot consider our sketch of the growing embarrassment of his position complete until we have pointed out one of the deeper causes which made his rejection by his people almost certain. This rejection was not due to any concourse of accidental circumstances. It was the necessary outcome of the character of the age and the religious disposition of the Jews. They had not the moral culture or the independent strength of faith which were required to understand and follow Jesus. In a word, they had not that sense of truth which was needed to test his words and principles, and to adopt them as approved. When we remember the direction taken by Judaism since the days of Ezra, we shall hardly expect to find that quickness of moral perception, still less that independence of the authority of Scripture and tradition, without which it was impossible to do Jesus justice. There is, therefore, nothing

¹ Luke xii. 54-56, xi. 16, 29 ; Matthew xii. 38, 39.

to surprise us in his fate. An age in which orthodoxy holds sway over fettered reason and conscience cannot comprehend the proofs of the spirit, and is not satisfied with the credentials that Truth herself brings with her. An unspiritual people must have not only its conscience but its imagination fed, and this was a demand which Jesus could not meet.

On this subject we have the unimpeachable evidence of a converted Jew, who had fought against the Nazarene with all his powers. Paul himself declared that the great reason why Israel did not believe was that "The Jews require a sign."¹ He meant: "Signs and wonders are the only proofs they will admit that any one is sent by God and is preaching the truth. If they cannot have this palpable, external proof, they withhold their faith." On that demand for miracles, that deficient sense of truth, and the constant collisions that it caused between Jesus and the leaders of the nation, we will now fix our special attention.

In the first place, our Gospel narratives, in their present form, are themselves the strongest proof how universal and how formidable this morbid craving had become. Issuing as they do from the circles of the faithful, they bear the stamp of the spirit that prevailed among them, and show us the conditions with which the preaching of Christianity had to comply, or rather the price it had to pay in order to gain a hearing. We see that it was compelled to set its original simplicity and purity aside, and make a wonder-worker of Jesus of Nazareth. Prodigies, it was imagined, were necessary to mark him as the Christ. "Truly thou art the son of God!" cry the witnesses of his miraculous deeds.² "Is not this the son of David?" ask the astounded multitudes,³ and the demons prove again and again that they are well aware of his dignity.⁴ In this spirit and from this cause all the emblematic sketches of the Master's outer actions and inner life which were in circulation from the earliest times were gradually transformed into stories of miracles.

We have constantly endeavored to restore these sketches to their original significance, but there are some narratives which hardly admit of such treatment. We will give two of them as specimens. They differ from the stories we have already examined, inasmuch as the others simply speak of all kinds of miraculous healings, whereas these two show that the Christians actually went so far as to ascribe raisings from the

¹ 1 Corinthians i. 22, 23.

³ Matthew xii. 23; compare pp. 38-40.

² See p. 269.

⁴ See pp. 131, 136.

dead to their Master. Jesus did indeed declare that he called the (spiritually) dead to life again;¹ but these stories owe their origin not so much to a misconception of this saying, as to the simple love of the marvellous which could not bear the Christ to be outdone by the prophets Elijah and Elisha.² It is possible, however, that Jesus may on some occasion have entered a house of mourning and endeavored to restrain the violent demonstrations of grief, and to banish the sorrow without hope, by the consoling assurance that death was but a sleep which a glorious waking would succeed. Some such saying may have determined the form of the following story :

A certain man called Jair, the chief of the city or the synagogue, once came to Jesus and bowed down to the earth before him, passionately entreating him to return with him to his house, where his only child, a daughter twelve years old, lay dying. If only he would lay his hand upon her she would recover and live! Jesus yielded to his entreaty and went with him, accompanied by the Twelve. On their way they met some people who came from Jair's house and said, " Trouble the Master no more, for your child is dead." But when Jesus heard the message he cheered the disconsolate father with the words, " Fear nothing! Only believe!" When they came to the house of mourning, Jesus allowed none but Peter, James, and John to go in with him. They found the hired mourners and flute-players already busy, while all the inmates of the house and the relatives of the child joined them in raising the extravagant signs of grief which were customary among the Jews. But the lamentations of all these people, as they wept and wailed aloud, offended Jesus. As soon as he entered he commanded them to be silent, and said : " Why are you weeping and wailing? The child is not dead but sleeping." They laughed him to scorn; but he had them all sent out, and with the parents and his three friends only entered the room where the girl was lying. Without pausing a moment he took her by the hand and said, " Talitha cumi!" that is, " Maiden, arise!" Upon this the spirit returned to her body, and she raised herself and stood up. Picture the joy and amazement of the parents! Jesus told them to give her something to eat, and strictly commanded them not to let any one know what had happened.³

¹ Matthew xi. 5; compare p. 254.

² 1 Kings xvii. 17-24; 2 Kings iv. 18-37; compare vol. ii. chaps. xii., xiii. pp. 138-149.

³ Matthew ix. 18, 19, 23-26 (Mark v. 22-24, 35 43; Luke viii. 41, 42, 49-56).

On another occasion, as he was going to the village of Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a crowd of followers, he met a funeral procession close by the gate. The only son of a widow was being carried to his grave, and the sympathy naturally felt for his mother had attracted a number of the villagers to the procession. Now when the Lord saw her he was deeply moved, and said to her, "Weep no more!" Then he went up to the bier and laid his hand on it, upon which the bearers stood still and Jesus cried, "Young man, arise!" and at once the dead man stood up and began to speak; and Jesus gave him to his mother. All present were overwhelmed with awe and praised God. "A mighty prophet has risen among us!" they cried. "God has graciously remembered his people!" and all Judæa and the whole country round rang with the name of Jesus.¹

These stories are not without artistic merit, but from a religious point of view they have little or no value. To translate a word of the Holy Spirit into a material prodigy is any thing but a deed of faith. For the rest, the gradual heightening of the marvel is obvious. First we have a girl, who has but just expired; then a young man, who is on the point of being buried. Before long it was asserted that Jesus had restored a body to life after it had been buried four days and was already decomposing!² But this latter story belongs to a different class, and the two we have given already are quite enough. We shall not stay to indicate the parallels between these narratives and the raisings from the dead by Elijah and Elisha; for our only purpose in giving them at all was to illustrate the spirit of the age. If the Christians could not believe in Jesus as the Christ, or at least could not justify their belief without producing such stories as these, we can well understand the reproach which a writer of the second century makes Jesus aim at his fellow-countrymen and contemporaries; "Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe."³

In connection with Paul's declaration given above, these words might be paraphrased: "The reason why the Jews never believed in Jesus was that they never saw him do signs and wonders."

We have now pointed out and described the enemy with which Jesus had to wrestle, and can go on to the circumstances under which the deadly encounter took place. That Jesus

¹ Luke vii. 11-17.

² John xi.

³ John iv. 48.

should be required to show “a sign” was but the natural consequence of the general want of all real sense of truth.

Our accounts are so wofully confused that it is impossible to say with certainty whence the demand came, whether it was repeated more than once, and if so what was its special significance on each occasion. As to the first point, however, we may be tolerably certain that the demand came from the usual opponents of Jesus, and not from the people generally. The Pharisees, then, or more especially the Pharisaic Scribes, demanded a sign of him; for they felt sure he would not be able to give it, and so they hoped to drive him into a strait. Matthew tells us that they made the demand on two occasions. Now, as a rule, when we find the same thing twice in the same Gospel, we simply lay the repetition to the Evangelist's account, and suppose that he had found two more or less discrepant versions of the same affair, and had accepted them as referring to distinct events. But in the present case we cannot do so, for on comparing Matthew with the other two Gospels, and observing the great difference between the answers of Jesus on the two occasions, we are compelled to distinguish between them. But since Matthew has thrown his materials together without regard to their true connection, our safest course will be to lay all the stress upon the answers of Jesus and endeavor to make out from them the special bearing of the questions. By this means we arrive at some such conception of what took place as follows:—

Some time ago the Pharisees had endeavored to bring Jesus into a strait by the question, “When is the kingdom of God coming?” Surely he who had announced the kingdom as near at hand from his very first appearance, he whose preaching had such constant reference to its advent, might fairly be supposed to know *when* it was coming. “The kingdom of God,” answered Jesus, “comes in no visible form; and no one can say, ‘See! here it is!’ or ‘See! it is there!’ for behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” This answer was evidently based on a misunderstanding, probably an intentional one. The “coming” of which the Pharisees spoke was the glorious establishment of the Messianic kingdom, whereas the answer of Jesus referred to its gradual preparation. The formation of a society of the future citizens was itself the “coming of the kingdom;”¹ and, since that was the only sense in which men had any thing to do with it, those who sought for the salvation to

¹ See p. 255.

come had only to attach themselves to Jesus. The complete and final triumph might be safely left to God.

Of course this answer did not in the least degree satisfy the questioners; so they presently came to him again with a more direct request: "If the kingdom of God is, as you say, close at hand, show us at least some *one* of the signs in heaven which are to precede the Messianic age." What could appear more reasonable than such a request? Every one knew that the end of the present age was to be heralded by fearful signs in heaven. The light of the sun was to be put out, the moon turned to blood, the stars robbed of their brightness, and many other fearful signs were to be shown!¹ If only *one* of these could be produced, they would be content; but if not, they must decline to surrender themselves to an idle joy which must end in a bitter disappointment: and surely Jesus himself could hardly expect them to believe in him on his bare word! Jesus saw at once the extreme difficulty of his position. "Do you want," he replied with some acerbity, "a sign in the sky that the kingdom of God is indeed at hand? When the sky is red at even you say, 'It will be fine to-morrow, as those evening tints declare.' If the sky is a lurid red in the early morning, you say, 'There will be a storm to-day, for the clouds are threatening.' You know well enough how to read the face of the sky, and can you not read the signs of the times?" Or, as Luke reports the words: "When you see a little cloud rising in the West, you say at once, 'It is going to rain.' And so it does. And when the south wind rises, you say, 'It will be hot to-day.' And so it is. You hypocrites! you can discern the face of earth and heaven, why can you not discern the times?" By the "signs of the times" he probably meant the remarkable spiritual signs which distinguished the age, rather than the deep political distress of the people.² Had he explained himself more fully, he would have pointed to one clear and unmistakable sign in the impetuous longing for the kingdom of God which had prevailed ever since John began to preach; and more especially to his own work and teaching, and the result they had produced. And again, was not the conversion of "sinners," and the religious movement among the "peoples of the land," a fulfilment of the ancient prophecies that spoke of the salvation to come? But such

¹ See, for example, Joel ii. 10, 31, iii. 15; Matthew xxiv. 29, 30; Acts ii. 19, 20; Revelation vi. 12, 13, xvi. 18, *et seq.*

² See pp. 96-99.

facts as these, though proof enough to Jesus that he had not misinterpreted the voice of his own heart,¹ were beneath the notice of the Scribes. Indeed, in some instances they were a distinct source of offence to the "clean." Consequently his opponents were not even aware that Jesus had wrested their weapon from their hands and turned it against their own bosoms. And he on his side, knowing that their hearts and consequently their eyes were closed against him, departed from them rather than expose himself to fruitless controversy and further questioning.

But the Pharisees did not intend to leave him at peace so long as they still met him on their way. If he could not give any guarantee for the fulfilment of the beautiful promises he made, let him at any rate produce his credentials and show his own personal right to speak! "Master," they said to him on another occasion, "we would gladly see a sign from you." They meant by a sign some miracle to prove that God had sent him. Here, if anywhere, they seemed to be distinctly within their rights; and here they could rely on having the people completely on their side, if only out of curiosity. The case was this: Jesus professed to be a prophet, and as such he was reverenced by the masses who honored him so highly. Now they, the Pharisees, declared that they were ready and anxious to acknowledge him themselves, if he would but satisfy their reasonable demand for proofs. There had never been a prophet, they urged, who had not performed miracles. For several centuries there had been no prophets at all, and generations ago their ancestors had already begun to look forward eagerly to the coming of a messenger from God who could remove their difficulties;² and now a man from Nazareth came and professed to be such a messenger,—was it any thing out of the way to request him to substantiate his claims? Was Jesus baffled by the Pharisees' request? No; but he was filled with the deepest indignation by their dulness of perception and blindness to the light of truth. Mark, who confuses this with the previous request, tells us that Jesus heaved a deep sigh that rose from his inmost soul, and said: "Why does this generation want a sign? I tell you, of a truth, if a sign be given to this generation —!" This broken form of words was the strongest mode of asserting that a thing would never happen. Matthew and Luke give the answer at greater length in the

¹ Compare pp. 254, 255; and Matthew xxiv. 32, 33.

² Compare Psalm lxxiv. 9; 1 Maccabees ix. 27, iv. 46, xiv. 41.

form of a rebuke introduced by an absolute refusal: "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign, and no sign shall be given it but the sign of the prophet Jona!" Jesus denounces those who ask for a sign as men who show their moral degradation and want of true piety by their hardness of heart and utter incapacity to judge of the truth, and yet more in their evil design of drawing the people away from him by teaching them to suspect the preacher who had no credentials. This appeal to the "sign of Jona" implies a heavy threat; but neither it nor the verses that follow are much to the purpose here. We shall discuss and explain them in the following chapter, when we find Jesus, disappointed in his own people, turning his eyes to the heathen world.

At present we need only remark that this demand for a sign, though made in the politest form, was on both occasions a most damaging method of attack; for the opponents of Jesus had public opinion entirely on their side. This completely explains the violence with which Jesus repelled the attack. In this matter he could not appeal to the people from their leaders,¹ for all were alike infected with this thirst for marvels. Jesus asked his brother men to believe in him because he spoke the truth, and the truth must and should be recognized by every heart. But reason and conscience are the organs by which truth is perceived, and their development in Palestine at this period was so imperfect and one-sided that they could no longer be trusted. Jesus had only too much reason to utter the solemn warning, "Look to it that the light which is in you be not darkness!"²

Had Jesus been a man of brilliant personal gifts, such as permanently fascinate and carry away the multitudes, the people would have clung to him still. But there was nothing sufficiently distinguished or uncommon about him. For a time the novelty of his mission, the enthusiasm with which he spoke and acted,—in a word, his moral force,—created some excitement; but this first impression gradually passed away, and at last every one became accustomed to him, wanted something fresh, and demanded some more startling sign than the occasional cure of a single demoniac. And in proportion as this indifference or unbelief increased, Jesus on his side raised his demands and adopted a tone of authority and an attitude of command unknown before. And so the alienation grew. A brief flicker of enthusiasm when he set

¹ Compare pp. 278, 280.

² See p. 159.

out for Jerusalem and awakened fresh hopes, a greater coldness than ever when those hopes were disappointed,—such was the inevitable future that lay before him.

Jesus never conquered this passion for miracles. At the cost of his life he triumphed over many obstacles; but this hostile power, this faithless demand for signs, soon crept into his own community. We have seen already how that same want of spiritual perception which contributed so powerfully to his fall threatened to undermine his cause when he was lead.

Jesus was well aware that his great foe was this incapacity to perceive the truth. The same want of faith blocked up his path which had poured out the blood of the ancient prophets. He saw more and more clearly that he too must share the common fate of prophets, and be rejected by the men of his own generation. He declared it plainly enough at Jerusalem :¹—

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the graves of the prophets and adorn the tombs of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers we would not have been guilty with them of the blood of the prophets.’ So you yourselves bear witness that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Then do you fill up your fathers’ measure!”



CHAPTER XXIV.

JESUS AND THE SAMARITANS AND HEATHEN.

MATTHEW XX. 1-16, XII. 38-42, XXII. 1-14; LUKE X. 25-37, XIII. 28-30, VII. 1-10, XVII. 11-19.²

THE apostolic age was torn by a fierce controversy as to whether those who were not Jews might be admitted into the community of the Christ, and so into the Messianic kingdom, without being first circumcised and otherwise incorporated into the people of Israel. Now, in this dispute, both parties appealed directly to their common Master in confirmation of their passionate assertions. Which of the two had

¹ Matthew xxiii. 29-32.

² Matthew viii. 5-13; Luke xi. 29-32, xiv. 15-24.

misunderstood him, and which was in the right? After what we have already seen of Jesus we cannot be at a loss for an answer a single moment. When Jesus himself transgressed the laws that referred to clean and unclean food, to ceremonial purity, and other such things; when he declared that they were of no importance, and robbed the external Jewish religion in general of its binding authority,—then he threw down the partition wall between Israel and “the peoples.” Nay more, his God was not the King of Israel, but the benefactor and the father of all mankind, even the idolaters themselves; and he required his followers to love the enemies of their faith, and pray for their heathen persecutors. In fact, the whole question was virtually, or rather practically, decided by his coming to make sinners, who stood on the same footing as heathen, members of the kingdom of God. The only question that can still be asked is whether he shrank from the consequences, obvious as they were, of his own principles. When he came into contact with heathen, as he must have done in Galilee with its heathen surroundings and its mingled population, did he shrink back? If not, how was it possible for the Jewish-Christians to appeal to him with perfect confidence?

If we look to the Gospels for a solution, we find the various accounts so completely contradictory that we are simply bewildered. On the one hand, the Twelve are strictly enjoined to beware above all things of turning to the heathen or Samaritans, and Jesus rejects a suppliant heathen woman with the words, “It is not right to take the bread of the children [Israelites] and throw it to the dogs [heathen.]”¹ How could a Paulinist call Jesus “Lord” after this? But elsewhere we find it repeatedly declared, and expressly urged upon the Apostles personally, that the gospel must be preached all over the world as a witness to all peoples.² How could the faithful friends of Jesus so completely forget this command? It is easy to see, however, that Jesus cannot really have said these things, and that they were only put into his mouth afterwards in consequence of the dispute itself, and at a time when it was raging. Some scholars have even gone so far as to say that, since the Apostles confined their activity to Israel, none of the sayings ascribed to Jesus which seem to favor the heathen can be genuine. But we have no right to go so far as this, for we know that the Twelve were not always the

¹ See pp. 182, 184, and chap. iii. p. 502.

² Matthew xxiv. 14, xxvi. 13, xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47

best of hearers, and never fully grasped their Master's free ideas. Besides, they actually did recognize, or at least tolerate, the preaching of Heathen-Christianity.¹ All we can be sure of is that they never received any definite command to go and preach to the heathen. On the other hand, it is equally certain that words of such rigid Jewish exclusiveness as those cited above never passed the lips of Jesus.

The question still remains, How are we to explain the fact that the orthodox members of the first Christian communities conscientiously believed themselves to be acting in the Master's spirit? Had he never expressed himself distinctly on the subject of the admission of the heathen? We must bear in mind that the question was not whether the heathen were to be admitted at all. No one disputed that; and many of the prophets long ago had foretold the conversion of the heathen to faith in Israel's God.² It was a question of the terms of admission. Now Jesus had never distinctly expressed an opinion on this subject, simply because he had never thought of any definite terms of admission at all, and the question had not arisen during the brief period of his public ministry. His conduct towards the publicans may seem conclusive to an unprejudiced observer; but the Jewish-Christians perhaps reflected that, after all, even these lost ones were sons of Abraham, and were not quite the same as positive heathen. And then *principles*, however clear and definite, can only appeal successfully to minds in sympathy with them; and it was impossible to produce any definite *action* or express *command* of Jesus with which to silence the champions of Israel's exclusive privileges; for, from the nature of the case, Jesus had confined his personal activity to his own nation,—besides which he cherished a very natural partiality for his own country and his own people. Finally, the heathen world was really at that time far below the moral and religious level of Jewish society; so that Jesus, however ready to acknowledge all that was good in the heathen, yet warned his followers, from time to time, against their worldliness and want of faith.³ On the other hand, the heathen with whom he came in contact, and who impressed him favorably with the spiritual capabilities of the heathen world, had doubtless already embraced the Jewish religion more or less completely. At least so we should gather, not so much from their being settled

¹ See pp. 18, 19.

² For example, Isaiah ii. 2-4, lxvi. 23; Michah iv. 2, *et seq.*

³ Matthew v. 47, vi. 32.

in the territory of Israel, as from their approaching Jesus of their own accord. His dealings with the heathen, then, may have given him the opportunity of shaming and threatening his own countrymen, without, after all, conclusively proving to the Jewish-Christians that a heathen might hope to become a member of the kingdom of God without first turning Jew.

We shall presently return for a moment to this point. Another question is, how far the ideas of Jesus with regard to the relations of the kingdom of God to the heathen and Samaritans were modified in the course of his public career? Here, too, the Gospels leave us in the lurch by their neglect of the order of time. But we may remedy the defect to some extent ourselves, for it stands almost to reason that he could not have begun by including the heathen in his survey; at any rate, he cannot at first have expected them to take the place of his own countrymen. Let us try, therefore, to form some conception of the successive stages of conviction on this point which Jesus went through under his varying experiences. In doing so we shall not always mention the Samaritans separately, but shall use the word "heathen" as including them, for we know that in the eyes of a Jew the two were on precisely the same footing.

In the first place, then, we may safely start from the fact that Jesus — himself an Israelite in heart and soul — began his work among his people with a view to hastening the Messianic kingdom; that is to say, with a view to helping on the realization of a purely Israelitish ideal for the benefit of Israel. Like the prophets, from whom he borrowed this conception, he thought in the first place of the salvation of his own people, and originally the work of redemption which he personally hoped to accomplish did not extend beyond them. But even then he believed, in common again with his great predecessors, that in the Messianic age Israel would be the light of the world and the teacher of the peoples, who in their turn would share all its privileges. From the very first Jesus was absolutely free from the narrow exclusiveness of his contemporaries, — an exclusiveness which sprang from national pride and religious rancor, and found utterance in anticipations of vengeance and unworthy conceptions of God. Two parables are still preserved which contain an emphatic protest against this exclusive spirit. The first most likely belongs to the earlier half of his career, and

is an emblematic history of the kingdom of heaven. It runs as follows : —

Autumn had come, and had brought the grape-harvest with it. It was a time of general rejoicing, as the grape-gatherers carried the clusters in baskets, with shouts of joy, to be trodden out at the wine-press. It was a time of rejoicing, but a time of the busiest labor too. The owner of a certain vineyard, seeing that his grapes were ripe and ought to be gathered without delay, went out at sunrise to engage laborers for the work. He had soon secured a number of men at the usual rate of wages, one denarius (about eightpence) for the day, and he sent them to his bailiff who set them to work. But he soon saw that more hands were wanted ; so about nine o'clock, when a quarter of the day was gone, he went into the market-place again, and there he found some laborers waiting with their implements to see if any one would employ them. So he engaged them too, but without making any special agreement about wages. He merely said, " Go to my vineyard, and I will pay you fairly." Meanwhile the sun had climbed the sky and was now blazing down upon the laborers from the mid-heavens, and the work was heavy and the hands still short, and all the grapes *must* be gathered that day, or it would be too late. So the master, who came now and then to see how the work was going on, went to the market-place again at midday, and yet again at three in the afternoon, and each time he engaged more laborers, promising fair wages, but not stating the amount, and sending them to his bailiff who was anxiously expecting help. At last, when the sun was drawing to the west, at five o'clock in the evening, the master saw some laborers still standing in the market-place. " Why have you been standing here all day doing nothing ? " he asked. " Because no one has engaged us," they answered gloomily. So he took them also into his service, though he said nothing about wages for the one hour left for work ;¹ and they came in fresh at the close of the day, and helped to finish the work.

The harvest was all got in, and evening came. Then the master told his bailiff to pay the men, " beginning with those that had come last, and going through to the first." So those that were set to work at five o'clock came first, and each of them received a denarius. The men who had been at work since six in the morning now expected to get more ; but they were disappointed, for they too received a denarius each.

¹ After an amended text.

They took the money with evident discontent, and went at once to the master to complain: "These last have only worked one hour, and you have paid them as much as us who have borne the toil and the heat of the whole day!" But the master answered the spokesman with quiet dignity: "My friend, I have done you no wrong. Did we not fix your wages at a denarius? Take it and go home. If I choose to give these last as much as you, have I not a right to do what I like with my own money? Why should my liberality offend you?"

Matthew is the only Evangelist who gives this parable. He inserts it just after a conversation between Jesus and the Twelve that ends with the words, "Many that are last shall be first, and first last;" and at the end of the parable he repeats the words in a slightly different form: "So the last shall be first, and the first last." It is evident, therefore, that he inserted the parable here because he supposed it to be an elaboration of this saying. In other words, he understood both the parable and the aphorism to be directed against the Apostles, and especially Peter. Though they had followed Jesus from the very first, and had left every thing for his sake, yet they would have no advantage over the disciples who had joined him later, who were joining him now, who should join him in the future up to the last moment before the consummation of the kingdom of God. Nay, they might very possibly be ranked below them! But the parable is not correctly interpreted, nor is its true connection given here; for it does not really refer to the disciples, nor does it deal like the aphorism with a case in which the last are put before the first, but with one in which all are made equal. What, then, is its true signification? Here, as elsewhere,¹ the vineyard typifies the preparation and the growth of the kingdom of God. The owner is God. The laborers summoned in the morning are the Jews; the others are "the nations."² In the envy of the first laborers Jesus rebukes the proud delusion of his countrymen that they, who had first arrived at a knowledge of God and of his salvation, would take the first rank and be clothed with the highest dignity in the Messianic kingdom, while the heathen would only be admitted to subordinate places,³ and their conversion in point of fact would only serve to exalt the triumph of Israel. This national pride and

¹ Isaiah v. 1; Matthew xxi. 28, 33 (Mark xii. 1; Luke xx. 9).

² Compare Luke xiii. 30.

³ Compare Ephesians ii. 11, 12, 19; Revelation vii. 4, 9, xxii. 2.

envy, says Jesus, God will put to shame. Thus understood, the parable speaks for itself, and we need only remark that there is no trace as yet of the later thought that the heathen would be put before the Jews, still less that the latter would be shut out altogether. All that is here asserted is the equality of the two, which no one can help seeing followed directly from the principles of Jesus, from his faith in God and his views of human nature.

The other story to which we referred speaks without metaphors; and in it, therefore, Jesus still more plainly rebukes the national and religious rancor of his countrymen. It is known as the parable of "the Good Samaritan;" and Luke, who is the only one that gives it, introduces it as follows:—

On a certain day a Jewish lawyer came to Jesus, intending to entangle him in his own words, and said: "Master! what must I do to inherit eternal life?" What could be more natural than to ask the preacher of the kingdom of God how one could be certain to gain admission into it? But Jesus saw his design; and since the man had made a study of the Law, and was not so ignorant as to need instruction, he made him answer his own question. "What does the Law say?" he replied,— "what does it require?" The lawyer answered immediately by citing a text from Deuteronomy, and another from Leviticus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy understanding; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." His insight secured the unreserved approval of Jesus. "Well said!" he cried. "Do this and you shall live." But the other, to show that he had not asked an idle question, said, "Yes, but who is my neighbor?" Upon which Jesus began the following story, by way of answer:

An Israelite, on his way home from the City of the Temple, was travelling alone to Jericho. He had already passed Bethany some time, and was in the middle of the fearful desert, with its barren rocks and deep precipitous ravines, when he paid a heavy price for his rashness in making the dangerous journey through this inhospitable region without any escort or armed companions; for a band of brigands leaped from behind the rocks, overpowered all resistance in a moment, hurled him from his mule to the ground, disarmed and stripped him to the skin. Then they left him heavily wounded, stretched bleeding and senseless on the ground, a certain prey to death unless speedy help arrived. He was not even able to cry for help, and indeed, in that dismal

wilderness, he would have had small chance of being heard at best. But see! a traveller from Jerusalem happens to come by that same way. He is a priest. He cannot fail to pass the man. He sees him lying there half dead, turns his ass to the other side of the way, and hurries on. Terror sank into his very heart when he saw such a sight in such a place, and knew for certain that robbers must be near! — how could he stay to help the victim? But not long afterwards the sound of hoofs might again be heard, and another traveller came by. His head-dress proclaimed him a Levite; and, as he drew near and came to the place, he looked at the wounded man, and then hurried forward on the other side of the way. Like the priest, he shrank from exposing himself to danger for the poor chance of rescuing a man he had never seen before. Was all hope lost? Not yet; for another traveller drew near. It was no one who had been visiting the temple this time. It was a Samaritan. He was going on his ordinary business round, and was hurrying on his way when he saw the miserable sufferer stretched upon the ground. He stayed his mule, and though he saw that the man was a Jew, yet his pity, once stirred, would not suffer him to leave him there. So he dismounted, knelt down by the wounded man to see if he was still alive, and when he found that he was, determined to run the risk! The ordinary equipment of a traveller enabled him to wipe and cleanse the wounds, and make a little salve out of wine and oil. So he dressed and bound up the wounds, and gently raised the man and placed him on his mule, which he led by the reins that its paces might be as smooth as possible. They were fortunate enough not to be surprised by the robbers again, and arrived in safety at an inn, where guests were received without distinction for a small payment, and at which the Samaritan was in the habit of staying. Here the wounded man was laid on a bed, and his friend provided him with every thing he needed, and stayed with him that evening and the following night. Then he was obliged to go on his way, and his patient already appeared to be out of danger. But he was determined not to do things by halves; so in the morning, when he was ready to start, he called the innkeeper and paid him two denarii in advance on behalf of the Jew, for he had been robbed of all he possessed, and consequently could not pay for himself. "Take every possible care of him," said the Samaritan; "and you need not be afraid of going beyond what I have deposited, for if you do I will pay the balance when next I come this way." Then he continued his journey.

"Now which of these three," said Jesus to the lawyer, "Priest, Levite, or Samaritan, should you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?" There could be only one answer; but the lawyer could not bring himself to pronounce the hated word "Samaritan" with commendation, so he answered, with some repugnance, "The one that took pity on him." "Do you go and do the same," said Jesus; and so the conversation ended. This was the practical solution of the abstract question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus compelled the haughty Jew to allow that the most despised and hated enemy of his people and his faith might be his neighbor, and then dismissed him with the exhortation to forget all differences of race and of religion, and by showing true mercy to make himself the neighbor of others. Ask rather, "Who is not my neighbor?" Whoever helps you and loves you is your neighbor. Do you, then, in your turn, regard yourself as the neighbor of all, without distinction, whom you can help or bless.

This parable gives us no right to ascribe to Jesus the paradoxical opinion that "all men are our neighbors," but it shows us very clearly that any one *may be* our neighbor, and that true humanity throws down all walls of partition between man and man. But there are several considerations which justify us in questioning whether Luke gives us the parable in its true connection. In the first place, it fits in somewhat awkwardly with what precedes and follows, and the context has evidently been affected by another narrative.¹ And, in the second place, the first two Gospels give a much more probable account of an interview between Jesus and a lawyer which Luke appears to have worked up in this passage. According to them the question is put in a much more definite form, and it is Jesus himself who joins the two texts together and gives them out as the essence of the Law.² Indeed, it is little short of absurd to ascribe to this Jew so profound and original a view of the question. We may, therefore, assume that the parable is out of place as Luke gives it, and that it was meant originally to show that true humanity and goodness raise even the most despised of heretics, even a Samaritan, above the most religious Jew, above the sacred persons of the priest or Levite. The parable shows small affection for the servants of the temple, and contains a severe rebuke of the Jewish spirit of exclusiveness.

¹ Compare Luke x. 25, 26, with xviii. 18, 20 a.

² Matthew xxii. 35 ff. (Mark xii. 28 ff.).

In the preceding chapters we have seen repeatedly and in detail how bitterly Jesus was disappointed in his expectations of his people. Their absolute incapacity to receive his gospel became constantly clearer. But to the very last he went on loving his country as passionately as ever, and straining all his powers to rescue it. Nor was his estimate of the religious privileges of Israel in any degree lowered. The very forms under which he spoke of the ideal future remained intensely Israelitish. Take this threat, for instance : —

“ I tell you that many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall lie down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the darkness without. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth ! ”

Here Jesus is speaking of the great Messianic feast ;¹ and the names of those who occupy the chief places show that it is prepared especially for the Israelites. Accordingly the Israelites are described as the children or heirs of the kingdom, — its intended or appointed subjects. Now Luke very properly assigns these words to a late period of the life of Jesus, and brings them into connection with a rebuke of Jewish pride ; but since this expression, “ *children of the kingdom*, ” as applied to the Jews was not at all to his taste, he omitted it. He gives the passage thus : “ There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and *you yourselves* are thrust out.”² But even this was not enough for a certain sectarian editor of this Gospel, who pruned it in the second century of all expressions favorable to the Jews. He substituted “ all the righteous ” in this passage for the patriarchs and prophets. On the other hand, Matthew has preserved the words in the most original form, but he has inserted them in the middle of a miraculous story, and has quite wrongly assigned them to an early period in the career of Jesus, before he could have had all the mournful experience of his people which dictated such expressions, — nay, at the very moment he was indirectly sounding the praise of Israel !³

Jesus constantly repeated this threat with ever-increasing emphasis, sometimes under the same imagery more elaborately worked out, and sometimes under other forms. The Israelites would be cut off by their own guilt from the salva-

¹ Compare Revelation xix. 9.

³ See pp. 308, 309.

² Luke xiii. 28.

tion prepared for them, they would bitterly lament their unbelief when it was too late, and their places would be taken by heathen from every quarter under heaven.¹ Even John had sternly warned his hearers not to trust in their descent from Abraham.² And now Jesus found in the Holy Scriptures many and many a lamentation over the stubbornness, the hypocrisy, the dulness of heart with which Israel had rejected the Lord and his messengers, and many an example of a deeper longing for salvation and a greater readiness to receive it on the part of the heathen.³ And was it not a fact that sinners, who were half heathen, already pressed into the kingdom and put the pious to shame? A little more delay, and their sentence would be passed. And as the Master's disappointment grew, his warnings became darker, and the threatening tone of his discourses rose; while the sense of offended dignity, and the just pride of the rejected prophet heightened rather than toned down the personal claims he put forward. Listen to the reply he made when told that if he wanted people to believe in him he must first prove his claims by a miracle: ⁴—

“A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign, and no sign shall be given it except the sign of the prophet Jona. On the day of judgment the men of Nineveh shall stand beside this generation before the seat of judgment, and shall condemn it by their example; for they repented at the preaching of Jona, and I tell you there is more than Jona here! The Queen of the South shall rise up on the day of judgment by this generation, and shall condemn it by her example; for she came from the end of the world to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and I tell you there is more than Solomon here!”

What are we to understand by this “sign of Jona” that was triumphantly to vindicate the mission of Jesus? The context indicates that the sign of Solomon might be substituted; but a prophet and a whole nation furnish a better parallel than a sage and a single woman to Jesus and his contemporaries.⁵ It appears from the explanation that follows that Jesus meant to say that heathen were converted by the preaching of Jona. This case stands alone in the history

¹ Luke xiii. 29.

² See p. 106.

³ Matthew xix. 8, xv. 7, xiii. 14, v. 12, xxiii. 37, xi. 21-24, xii. 41, 42; Luke iv. 25-27.

⁴ See pp. 289 f.

⁵ Compare vol. ii. chap. vii. p. 69, and vol. ii. chap. xix. pp. 525-527.

of the prophets, and may well be called "*the sign*." In the same way this generation, already condemned by these examples from the olden time, must consent to see the gospel given to the heathen and received by them with regenerating faith. So should the preaching of Jona be a type or sign of the preaching of Jesus. Most certainly Jesus did not mean, as Matthew would have it, that he himself would spend three days in the world below between his death and his resurrection, just as Jona had spent three days in the belly of the monster of the deep. Such an explanation is simply absurd in view of the words themselves, the context, the speaker, the hearers, and the narrative referred to. But neither is Luke correct in supposing the meaning to be that Jesus himself was a sign to his people and his age, just as Jona was a sign to the Ninevites. This interpretation is not supported by the context, and is decidedly obscure; for it would imply that Jona and Jesus were signs of the power of the word, or of the mercy of God, or something similar, all which would be quite inappropriate here. This reference to the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba immediately calls to mind the similar utterances which we have already heard from Jesus. For instance, he reminded his hearers, on some occasion which we can no longer identify, how Elijah and Elisha, at the command of the Most High, had helped heathen rather than the people of their own country,—when the one went to a Phœnician widow and the other healed a Syrian captain. And again, he placed the luxurious and licentious Tyre and Sidon before Bethsaida and Chorazin, and Sodom, the very type of infamy, before Capernaum, in capacity for belief and penitence; declaring that it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment than for those places which had been the ordinary scene of his ministry.¹ All these are modifications of that one thought: The Jews are sunk below the heathen by their utter incapacity to receive the gospel.

When Jesus had once formed this idea, that the Jews would be excluded and the heathen would take their places, we might feel almost sure that he would give expression to it in an allegorical description of the prospects of the kingdom of God. In point of fact, we have two parables that answer to this description, one of which is given by both Matthew and Luke; but the two versions differ so widely that we can

¹ See pp. 235 and 259.

hardly recognize the story as the same. In Matthew we read as follows : —

There was once a king who was preparing a wedding feast for his son. When the first day of the festivities arrived, he sent his servants round early in the morning to tell the people he had invited that this was the day on which they were expected. But they all refused to come. Then he commissioned other officers of the court to go to the guests and say again : “ See now, I have prepared the feast, I have slaughtered my oxen and sheep, and every thing is ready. Come, therefore, to the wedding feast ! ” But they did not trouble themselves about the matter, and went on their way, — the one to his lands, and the other to his business. [And the rest seized the messengers, and ill-treated them and killed them. And when the king heard of it his anger was roused, and he sent his soldiers to destroy those murderers and to set their city on fire.] Then he said to his servants : “ The wedding feast is ready, but the guests were not worthy of it. I will tell you what to do ; go to the most frequented spots in the great highways and ask any one you chance to find to come to the feast.” So the servants went out and brought back every one they met — travellers and tramps alike — until there was not a place empty at the wedding feast.

If we strike out the interpolation about the ill-treatment of the messengers and the vengeance taken by the king the story flows smoothly enough, and, though it sounds very odd to our ears, Oriental customs explain a great deal of it. It evidently means that the places in the Messianic kingdom which Jewish insolence had left vacant would be filled by the heathen. The interpolated passage, to which there is a parallel in Luke in another connection,¹ is utterly out of place where it stands. It refers to the evil treatment which the messengers of Christ experienced from the Jews, and the punishment inflicted on the latter in the devastation of Jerusalem. It is not a genuine utterance of Jesus, therefore, — nay, it is even post-apostolic ; and to represent the calling of the heathen as though it were not to take place till after the fall of Jerusalem, which was in the year 70 A.D., spoils the whole parable. Matthew introduces the story at a peculiarly inappropriate point of the history, and concludes it with an appendix, to which we shall have to return presently.

Luke, on the contrary, gives us a picture which calls for no special comment. We read that Jesus was dining with a

¹ Luke xix 27.

Pharisee on the Sabbath, and in answer to the exclamation of one of the guests, “Blessed are they that shall be admitted to the Messianic feast!” told the following story:—

A rich man once prepared a splendid entertainment. He asked a great number of guests beforehand, and they accepted. When the feast was prepared, he sent round his servant, as an extra mark of attention, to say to the guests, “All is ready, and I am expecting you.” But they all began to make excuses with one mouth. The first said: “I have just bought a piece of land, and I really must go and look at it. You must not take it amiss, but I cannot come.” Another said: “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go and try them. You must not be vexed if I do not come.” Another: “I have married lately, and cannot leave home just now.” And so with them all; they all thought more of their own business than of their engagement. When the servant came back with these messages, his master was of course very angry, and said to him: “Go out again, into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring hither the poor and needy, the blind and the lame.” Presently the servant returned and said: “Master! I have done as you commanded, and there is room still.” “Then go out of the city, and whomever you find on the roads or along the hedge-rows spare no trouble, but compel them to come with you that my house may be full. For I tell you not one of those who were invited shall taste my feast!”

Here, as we see at once, every thing is as it should be. The story itself seems far from impossible when we consider the usage of Eastern countries. The separate images correspond closely to the true purpose of the parable, and the order of succession is carefully observed. The points in which Luke departs from Matthew strike us at once. Here there are three separate invitations,—first, to the pious and respectable Jews, who decline (observe the delicacy of the delineation); second, to the outcasts of Israel, who accept (the terms by which the sinners are described have something of an Ebionite air about them);¹ and third, to the heathen, in which every effort must be put forth to take no refusal. There is but one servant who invites the guests to the kingdom of God—namely, Jesus himself,—and an ordinary supper is substituted for the royal wedding feast. How far Luke has retained the original form of the story in these points, and how far he has modified, improved, and com-

¹ Compare Luke xiv. 21 with 13. See also p. 245.

pleted it, it is impossible to say with any confidence. All that we can be sure of is that the occasion of its delivery is his own invention.

We have represented all these threats, though doubtless addressed more especially to the Pharisees and their adherents, as extending to the whole of the Jewish people, the "heirs of the kingdom." But of course there were honorable exceptions. We have also supposed that the threats increased in number and severity as Jesus approached the close of his career. But however this may be, it is certain that in spite of his melancholy experience and dark forebodings as to the spiritual incapacity of the Jews he still labored to the very end, with unwearied zeal, to save them. In fact, these very threatenings were intended as one means of bringing them to repentance. We shall presently see him resolve to make a last and mighty effort in the City of the Temple itself, and thus appeal to his nation in general. When he fails in this we shall find him drawing one more sketch, in darker colors than ever, of the conduct and the destiny of the Jews.

But he knew already that the result of his labors and the triumph of his cause did not depend upon his reception or rejection by Israel. Should his gospel be finally rejected by Israel, he still had hope. He had included the heathen world in the sweep of his forecasting thought, and there his gospel would find faith. This was his consolation even before the fatal conflict at Jerusalem was decided.

Whenever Jesus speaks of the Messianic feast, we see that he regards the accession of the heathen to take the place of his own unbelieving countrymen as a kind of incorporation of these heathen into Israel, or at any rate as the communication to them of privileges which originally belonged to Israel. Indeed, this seemed so obvious that the Apostle of the heathen himself took the same view.¹ Israel was, after all, the people to whom the revelations and promises of God had been made.² Salvation was of the Jews.³ How this incorporation or communication was to be effected, — whether it was enough for the heathen to have faith and to desire salvation, or whether they must also comply with certain external conditions, — this was a question, as we have said before, which did not rise until after the death of Jesus. Now

¹ Romans xi. 15 ff. i. 16.

² John iv. 22.

² Romans iii. 1 ff.

though we, who are free from the national and religious prejudices of the Jews, cannot possibly imagine Jesus making the admission of the heathen dependent upon any outward form ; though we consequently regard the Heathen-Christian preachers as absolutely in the right on this point, — yet we can partly understand how the Twelve, and all the Jewish-Christians with them, could appeal in complete good faith to the fact that Jesus had never expressly declared that heathen or any others were absolved from circumcision and obedience to the Law ; and, consequently, when a number of Jews were converted soon after the Master's death, it might be supposed that his threats against his people had been to a great extent averted ;¹ that Israel would still retain the place of honor in the kingdom of God, and that the believing heathen would be allowed to take the lower place assigned to them only on condition of their submitting in whole or in part to the Law.²

Now the Gospels are full of stories and expressions which refer to these very points ; but though they profess to be passages in the life of Jesus, or sayings uttered by him, they really sprang up in the midst of the subsequent conflict of parties, and indeed were produced by it. We called attention at the beginning of this chapter to several of these sayings, which will find their true place in the history of the apostolic period ; and here, by way of conclusion, we will give a single specimen of the work of each of the three schools, — the orthodox, the mediating, and the liberal.

At the close of the parable of the royal wedding feast Matthew sketches this additional scene : —

When the feast was at its height the king himself came in, that the guests might have the honor and pleasure of his illustrious presence. As he passed along the colonnades and among the couches, surveying and accosting his guests, he perceived a man without a wedding garment ! In mingled anger and surprise he cried, “ Friend ! how did you gain admission here without a wedding garment ? ” The insolent intruder had not a word to say. “ Bind him hand and foot,” said the prince to the attendants, “ and cast him into the darkness without. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” For many are called but few chosen.

This last aphorism was undoubtedly uttered by Jesus, though we cannot say on what occasion. It means : Those who are invited into the kingdom of God are many, but those

¹ Compare Jeremiah xviii. 7, 8, *et seq.*

² Compare p. 232.

who show themselves fit and worthy to enter it are few. In this connection, however, it is entirely out of place, for here we read of only a single member of the whole company being cast out; or even if we include the discourteous guests or the murderers, at any rate the festive hall was full. Setting this aside, we turn to the guest without a wedding garment. That a man picked up hap-hazard on the highway should not be provided with such a robe is far from surprising; and the appeal to an imaginary Oriental custom of the host furnishing his guests with suitable apparel quite breaks down. But it is needless to dwell upon this matter, or to ask how this intruder had forced his way into the hall without a proper robe, for it is perfectly obvious that the whole scene is entirely out of place in the parable of the wedding feast. Whatever its meaning may be, it is quite foreign to the purpose of the story into which it is inserted. If it is authentic, it must be a fragment of some story the rest of which has been lost. It has been conjectured that it was a warning either to Judas, or more generally to all slovenly, ill-accoutred guests of the approaching kingdom of heaven. But the probability is that it is not an authentic utterance of Jesus at all; and, in its present connection at any rate, it is certainly intended to indicate that heathen who vainly imagined they could enter the Messianic kingdom just as they were, without the necessary festal garment of righteousness according to the Law, would be miserably rejected at the great judgment.¹

We will now take another story, and this time it shall be the work of the conciliatory school: When Jesus had returned to Capernaum, after pronouncing the Sermon on the Mount,² an officer of the garrison came to him, and said: "Lord! my servant is lying in bed at home, disabled, and in extremity of pain!" "I will come and heal him then," said Jesus readily. "No, Lord!" said the heathen, "I am not worthy to receive you under my roof. Only say the word of might, and my servant will be well. I understand these things; for I myself have my superiors and my subordinates, and I say to one soldier, 'Go!' and he goes; and to another, 'Come!' and he comes; and to this servant of mine, 'Do this!' and he does it. In the same way you have the spirits of sickness under your authority." Jesus listened in surprise and delight, and then turning to his followers, he cried: "I tell you I have not met with such great faith even in Israel!

¹ Compare, for example, Acts xv. 1 and Revelation iii. 4, 5, 18, xix. 7-9.

² See p. 141.

itself!" Thereupon he dismissed the officer, with the assurance, "It shall be to you according to your faith!" And at that moment his servant recovered.

So Matthew tells the story; but Luke heightens the coloring by making the sick man lie "at the point of death," and still more by exaggerating the officer's humility. He thinks himself unworthy of approaching Jesus in person, and makes use of the friendly offices of some Jewish elders, who earnestly plead his cause with Jesus: "He deserves this boon, for he loves our nation, and it was he who built us a synagogue." It matters little that this trait introduces a further improbability and contradiction,¹ for in its literal acceptation the story is hopeless at best. Would Jesus really have been pleased with such gross superstition, were it conceivable? And is it not absolutely impossible that he could have healed the sick man from a distance? The only essential point, and the only one to which we need attend, is the indirect commendation of Israel, in which Jesus had found great faith, and the direct praise of the heathen, who had shown still greater faith. The conciliatory spirit of the story is obvious at once. The hint that the heathen when converted to Christianity love Israel, and are ready in case of need to support it with their gifts, is by no means without significance. It also deserves notice that the only two narratives which the Gospels contain of miracles worked in favor of *heathen*, in consideration of their great faith, also furnish the solitary examples of miracles performed *from a distance*. This feature is a striking indication at once of their originally symbolic character and of their remarkable fidelity to the truth they shadowed forth; for personally or hand to hand Jesus labored only for the preservation of his own countrymen, but from a distance,—that is to say, from heaven, and by means of his envoys,—he also toiled to deliver the heathen.

Lastly, we will give an example of the work of the liberal school. The third Evangelist differs from the first and second in making Samaria the scene of a considerable part of the labors of Jesus. In describing the memorable journey to Jerusalem he begins by completely departing from Matthew and Mark, and making Jesus pass through Samaria and spend some time in it.² An elaborate narrative intervenes before Luke joins the other two Evangelists again, and it would seem that the scene is throughout laid either in whole or in

¹ Luke vii. 6 ff.; and compare verse 3 with verse 6.

² Luke ix. 51, 52, 56, 57, x. 1, 38, xiii. 22, xiv. 25, xvii. 11.

part in Samaria.¹ But on this point the Evangelist's expressions are not free from ambiguity. Now this independent narrative is the longest section of Luke's whole work, and records a number of parables, sayings, and events which do not occur in the other Gospels. It begins with an unhistorical account of a rebuke administered to the sons of Zebedee for reciprocating the sectarian hatred of the Samaritans,² and it goes on to describe how Jesus appointed seventy other disciples and sent them out, two and two, to visit every town or village to which he himself was intending to come. But the whole of this journey through Samaria is incredible. The oldest accounts represent Jesus as going through Peræa, and Luke himself involuntarily confirms them by making him pass through Jericho to the capital. Nor did the journey occupy so long a time as would appear from the account of it given by Luke, who disguises it almost beyond recognition, and transforms it into a very extensive missionary undertaking, which was to include at least five-and-thirty separate places. Nor is the narrative consistent with itself, for the Evangelist constantly forgets that Jesus is not in Galilee, and most of the occurrences he describes could not possibly have taken place in Samaria.³ But however incredible Luke's account may be, its purpose is obvious enough. In laying the scene of an important part of the Master's labors outside the land of the Jews, he intends to represent the problem of heathen conversions as already solved by the facts.

The same purpose may be discerned in the following story. It is an unsuccessful imitation of the account we have already examined of the healing of a leper.⁴ It is absolutely unhistorical, and does not make the least addition to our knowledge of the life or character of Jesus. It is simply intended to show that, while those who are and those who are not Jews are alike leprous and unclean, labor is far more likely to be repaid among the latter than among the former:—

On his journey to Jerusalem, through Samaria and Galilee, Jesus was just entering a certain village when ten lepers, standing at a distance as their unclean disease required, besought him aloud, "Jesus! Master! take pity on us!" Their appeal was not in vain. "Go your ways," he replied,

¹ Luke ix. 51–xviii. 14.

² See p. 192.

³ For instance, Luke xiii. 10, 31, x. 25, xi. 37, 45, 53, xiv. 1, xv. 2, xvi. 14, xvii. 20.

⁴ See pp. 202, 203; compare 2 Kings v. and vol. ii. chap. xiii. pp. 157–159.

filling their hearts with joyful hope, “and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went their fearful malady forsook them. Now one of them, seeing that he was healed, went back to his benefactor glorifying God, and bowed down before him with fervent gratitude. This man was a Samaritan. Jesus not unnaturally said, “Were there not ten lepers healed? Then where are the other nine? Is this stranger the only one who returns to give thanks to God?” Then he looked approvingly upon the man, who was still kneeling at his feet, and said, “Rise up and go your way; your faith has saved you.”

Strangers received the help of Israel’s deliverer with gratitude. His gospel purified the heathen world from its deep corruption, and was recognized by it as the source of light and strength, the fountain of new life.

Jesus, to his eternal glory, retained his hope unshaken through all the sad experiences of his own people’s want of faith; and that hope was nobly justified by the result.

CHAPTER XXV.

JESUS THE MESSIAH.

MARK VIII. 27-30; MATTHEW IV. 1-11.¹

JE稣 had withdrawn from the scene of conflict. He had taken ship with the twelve at Dalmanutha, or in the neighborhood of Magdala, where his opponents were harassing him, and had crossed the lake.² He landed on the north-eastern shore, went on to Bethsaida, crossed the river a little above this city, and, keeping it on his right hand, still journeyed northwards. Some ten miles further up, the way led over Jacob’s Bridge (which is standing yet), and along the left bank of the river Jordan and the waters of Merom. Then he skirted the fertile and well-watered plain above this little lake, and kept his course northward, till about twenty miles above Jacob’s Bridge he came upon the hamlets that lie round Cæsarea Philippi to the south.

It was a region of entrancing beauty and of extreme fer-

¹ Matthew xvi. 13-20; Luke ix. 18-21, iv. 1-13; Mark i. 12, 13.

² See pp. 281 ff.

tility ; the same that had excited the cupidity of the Danites in the olden time.¹ Here the many fountains and branches of the Jordan foamed and rushed upon their way, to join at last in one broad stream ; and the eye wandered over the fairest pastures and the noblest forests till it rested on the stately Hermon. The city whose territory lay in this favored region was called after Augustus Cæsar, like its namesake on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea ; and to distinguish it from the latter it bore an additional name taken from the tetrarch Philip, who founded or at least extended and beautified it very soon after his accession, with a view to making it the seat of his government. It was for the most part a heathen city, and could boast of more than one celebrated shrine in its immediate neighborhood. At the time of which we are speaking it was in Roman territory.

What was it that took Jesus two short days' journey to the extreme north of Palestine with no apparent object? It cannot have been to escape his enemies ; for he need have gone no further than Bethsaida to be safe from the plots of Herod and the pursuit of the champions of Jewish orthodoxy. Nor was his object simply to rest a time and enjoy the beauties of Nature ; for he was too deeply absorbed in many questions of extreme importance to have eyes or attention for those beauties now. He felt that he must collect himself, examine his position and prospects from every side, come to some definite decision, and adopt the corresponding measures. Things could not go on as they were. He must choose some new line of action, and must hasten the decisive moment. The thoughts and projects which had long been rising and growing in his mind, especially since the death of John, now came to full maturity. And now, for the first time, he was in a position to communicate them to his friends. It was high time to do so. The third Evangelist indicates the importance of the crisis by saying that Jesus prayed. Doubtless he did ask wisdom from on high and commit the issue to God.

Somewhere in the neighborhood of Cæsarea, then, as he was out of doors with the Twelve, he turned to them, and, with an expression both of face and voice which showed them it was no ordinary matter of which he spoke, asked, "Whom do people suppose me to be?" They knew that he did not mean to ask them what his opponents said of him, but what the masses, who regarded him with more or less favor, thought

¹ See vol. i. pp. 376, 377.

and expected of him. Hitherto he had troubled himself but little with such matters, for he had always kept his own personality as completely as possible in the background ; but at this crisis he must know the opinion of his followers, for much depended on it. The Twelve were naturally in a better position than Jesus himself for ascertaining the opinions generally held concerning him, and they had no difficulty in answering his question. It appeared that several opinions were current. Some believed that he was John the Baptist, who had not really been murdered, or had been called back by God from the land of shadows to take up his work again ; others thought he was Elijah, returned from heaven to perform the task that had been assigned to him and prepare for the Messianic age ; others again took him for Jeremiah, risen from the dead to disclose the sacred objects that had been concealed ever since Jerusalem was sacked ; others regarded him more vaguely as one of the ancient prophets returned to life from the world below to do the work of preparation.¹

There is much appearance of diversity in these opinions, and at first sight their extravagance may seem astounding ; but a moment's reflection will put an end to our surprise, and will show us that in the only essential point there is remarkable unanimity among them ; for all the different opinions come to this, that Jesus was the precursor of the Messianic kingdom. The form which this fundamental belief adopted was dependent, in the case of each individual, upon whether he expected Elijah or Jeremiah, or, more vaguely, "one of the prophets," or John himself, to complete the work of preparation. The great mass of his disciples then regarded Jesus as the herald of the kingdom of God ; and, considering the character of all his preaching from his first appearance in public, no belief could possibly have been more natural.

It was clear, however, that the disciples were simply giving their Master a faithful account of what "people" said of him, and were not stating their own belief ; and Jesus, following up the first question with another, asked them eagerly, "But you yourselves ! whom do you think I am ?" Constrained yet eager glances passed between the Twelve, and for a moment there was silence, — but for a moment only ! Then Simon (Peter), the foremost of them all upon this as upon other occasions, answered confidently, " You are the Messiah !" It was evidently in the name of all the rest, as well as his own, that he offered this title (the highest that could be conceived)

¹ See pp. 49, 99, 104, 272.

to his Master. Nor did Jesus reject it, though he strongly urged his disciples never to speak of it to any one, nor to let their conviction be known.

But, for all that, henceforth Jesus *was* the Messiah; not only in his own consciousness, but to the world. His resolve, which had been his own secret hitherto, still capable of alteration, was now irrevocable. His own personal fate and the future of his cause were now decided.

Here we may pause to point out some of the inferences that may be drawn from this conversation between Jesus and his friends, and to offer some necessary explanations.

In the first place, the two questions and answers prove incontrovertibly that hitherto Jesus had never proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, and had never been recognized as such by others. This consideration is absolutely fatal to the historical character of all those recognitions of his Messiahship which we have seen ascribed to demons, to sufferers who asked his aid, to his own disciples, and to the people at large.¹ But there is another point of more importance which must be considered in this connection. According to the Gospels, Jesus very early adopted the practice of frequently speaking of himself in the third person under the designation of "the Son of Man." We have treated this expression as simply equivalent to the first personal pronoun "I."² Indeed, it is impossible to lay down any fixed rule as to when Jesus uses "I" and when "the Son of Man," and the condition in which our authorities have come down to us is such that we cannot at all rely upon them on such a point as this. It often happens that one Gospel has "I" and another "the Son of Man" in the very same passage. For instance, in the scene we have just described Matthew gives the first question thus: "Whom do people take the Son of Man to be?" For this and other reasons it is very doubtful what Jesus intended the name to mean. He certainly never used it as implying that he was himself the ideal man. To do so would have been utterly foreign to his nature. Now Ezekiel constantly calls himself in his own oracles "son of a man,"³ that is "weak mortal!" and it has been conjectured that Jesus borrowed the term from him, and used it to indicate his prophetic mission and at the same time his human infirmity and dependence upon God,—or perhaps the latter only. Others suppose that

¹ See pp. 135, 136, 208, 269, 287.
² Compare vol. ii. chap. ix. p. 406.

² See pp. 187, 199, 204, 214, *et seq.*

the expression was taken from the well-known vision of Daniel, where it is used for “the kingdom of the saints.”¹ In this case Jesus may have applied it either to the subjects of the Messianic kingdom generally, and to himself as one of them, as their leader and exemplar, or in a more strictly personal sense to himself as king. There is, indeed, no room to doubt that the vision in Daniel is the source from which the expression is taken in the numerous passages that speak of the “coming” of the Son of Man, and of his coming “with the clouds.” Here and there this expression may be used as equivalent to the revelation of the *kingdom* of Messiah,² and indeed Matthew has “the Son of Man” in a passage in which the other two read the “kingdom of God.”³ But when it is said of this Son of Man that he shall “sit at the right hand of God,” which the ideal king is described as doing in the hundred and tenth Psalm, the reference is most certainly to the Messiah himself, and specifically to Jesus as the Messiah.⁴ Here we are met by another difficulty; for if Jesus really did call himself the Son of Man before this occurrence at Cæsarea Philippi, then the expression cannot *originally* have meant “the Messiah,” either on his lips or in the opinion of his hearers. In short, we must be content to confess our ignorance. We can be sure only of this: that Jesus never claimed the title as a personal right, but simply used it to indicate the nature of his work and his function in the world.

Another point of still greater interest is the question, how long and in what sense Jesus had felt that he was called to be the Messiah? We must bear in mind that if on this occasion he accepted a title that had never before been claimed by him, or offered to him, he did so simply because it really corresponded better than any other title to his personal consciousness of the nature of his mission. His own inmost convictions emphatically forbade him to reject the title. Let no one think that he acquiesced out of complaisance to a Jewish error or a prejudice of the Apostles. Such weak compliance would have been impossible to him, and, moreover, in this case would have been the very height of folly. Then, how are we to reconcile the beginning with the end of his career; the task of the king with that of the herald of the kingdom of God?

¹ Daniel vii. 13, 14; compare verses 18, 22, 27; Psalm lxxx. 17; and vol. ii. chap. xxii. p. 555.

² Matthew x. 23, xxiv. 27 (Luke xvii. 24), 30 (Mark xiii. 26; Luke xxi. 27).

³ Matthew xvi. 28; compare Mark ix. 1; Luke ix. 27.

⁴ Matthew xxvi. 64 (Mark xiv. 62; Luke xxii. 69); compare xix. 28, xxxv. 31; and Acts vii. 56; Revelation i. 13, xiv. 14.

Had he known that he was the Messiah from the beginning of his public life, and had he hitherto concealed this knowledge? Or had his own views changed in this respect, and had he only lately assumed in his own mind the task and name of Messiah instead of those of precursor? Most people adopt the former supposition, and believe that at his baptism, as the Gospels declare, or between that event and the imprisonment of John, he became conscious that he was the Messiah. But we have adopted the other alternative, and have assumed its truth in our treatment of the narratives already dealt with. To us it appears in the highest degree unnatural that Jesus should have begun his ministry with a secret reservation, should have kept his true mission long concealed, and in a certain sense given himself out for something other than what he really believed himself to be. The natural inference always is that an honest man thinks he is what he says he is. Moreover, the Messiahship was not a right or dignity — like that of the pretender to a crown — which Jesus at a definite moment felt to be his due. It was a life-task, and to take it up required a stern resolve. When first the thought rose in his heart, and his sense of duty more and more clearly pointed him to the task, he must in the nature of things have paused for a time in uncertainty. A sublime act of faith was needed like that by which John stood up to do Elijah's work, but loftier and mightier. As John had determined to hasten the coming of God's kingdom, so Jesus resolved to do neither more nor less than bring it to earth himself!

It is true that the period within which this important change in his conception of his task took place must have been very limited; but intensity and concentration of life may make one year equivalent to many. We should hardly expect a man like Jesus to begin with the very highest and hardest task before he had even tried his strength. He too, like every one else, must first express himself in word and deed, and set himself with all his powers and all his gifts to work, before he could possibly come to the full consciousness of his own nature and his own powers. Again, when first he began to teach, he had promised himself and the world that the kingdom would be shortly founded by a glorious act of God, and it needed experience to teach him that, unless he girded himself to new and intenser effort, that kingdom would *not* come as yet. He was disappointed in his nation and its leaders. Like all great reformers, he had expected the speedy realization of his ideal without having formed any

definite conception of the way in which it would be brought about. This realization, he at first imagined, was not his work. Preparation only was the task that had been assigned to him ; but, since this preparation for the kingdom was itself an initial establishment of it, he spoke of the kingdom of God already as present among men. He had spoken from the first, and all through the time when his work appeared so wonderfully successful, of a gradual and natural development ; but he had not at all realized the extreme slowness which necessarily characterizes such a process. What of that ? If his work had grown, so had his powers. He had risen up to continue the preaching of John, and to complete his work. He had turned to the sinners, knowing that if they repented the promised salvation would no longer be delayed ; and when his efforts had been successful in many cases, when the expression of his inner life and the exercise of his powers had taught him to know himself, then the conviction had risen within him that the heart of man knew no religious wants which he could not satisfy. And therefore he *could* no longer point to a future in which God would bless his people with purer light, closer communion with Himself, and more blessed peace than those which he (Jesus) already experienced himself and knew that he could give to others. At the same time his own sense of dignity rose in direct proportion to the violence of the opposition he experienced from the learned and pious champions of religion. The pride of the discarded prophet was aroused. The more decisively he was rejected the more distinctly did he put himself forward and assert his personal claims. This brings us to a final and conclusive proof that he had but recently resolved to become the Messiah. It may be found in the change which we have had repeated opportunities of observing in his general bearing. Not only had he definitely broken with the Pharisaic party, but he had assumed a far more lofty tone of authority than ever before.¹

We are now in a position fully to understand all this. Jesus had put his people to a practical test, and had discovered that if no other way were taken than that which John and he himself so far had trodden, then the kingdom of God was *not* at hand. A heroic effort was needed to make it come, yet come it must and should. He himself must shrink from no sacrifice, and fall short of no demand, that might be requisite. Now he knew for certain that he pos-

¹ See pp. 259, 273-275, 278-281, 302; compare pp. 212, 215.

sessed all those spiritual blessings which were promised in the Messianic age, and therefore he might and could declare that the kingdom of God had come in him. What he could do and might do he must do. What he was justified in saying and able to say, that he was also bound to say ; not “the kingdom of God is at hand !” but “the kingdom of God is here ! I am the Messiah ! As far as human agency and effort go, I bring you the promised salvation.”

All this shows us clearly enough the sense in which Jesus became the Messiah. It was probably not without hesitation that he adopted the *title*, for the name of Messiah would be almost sure to occasion the grossest misconceptions in the minds not only of the people, but of his own special friends as well. It is true that there had never been, and was not then, any settled belief as to the Messiah ; but the conception of a magnificent and powerful monarch was pretty generally associated with the word, and of course Jesus never dreamed of expecting worldly honor and dominion. But, on the other hand, it was impossible for him to reject the title, especially now that it was offered to him spontaneously. Had he done so, it would have caused the far more serious misconception that another (the Messiah) was still to be expected, and that Jesus himself was not qualified or competent to establish the kingdom of God ; whereas, he felt that he had indeed come to fulfil the hope of the pious ancestors and the promises of the prophets, and that he should not fail. In the true and highest sense of the term, according to its spiritual signification, he felt that he could be the Messiah ; and he resolved that he would. He and no other ! He would rule, but only by moral force, by the influence of his gospel. To him the kingdom of God meant first and chiefly the union of all spiritual blessings ;¹ and, as the Messiah, he would dispense these blessings. He would be the light of the world, the salt of the earth ; as a teacher he would lead the peoples, personally or by means of his emissaries, to a sense of the love of God and the dignity of man ; he would be followed and obeyed for the truth's sake which he uttered. He would be the sower, and would see an ever-richer harvest rising from the seed that he had sown ; he would guide the feeble ; he would be the peacemaker and the giver of life ; and his authority should be acknowledged by all mankind in perfect freedom and with all the heart. In this sense only could he adopt the title and accept the homage of his friends. Thus we see that even

¹ See p. 151.

when Jesus was compelled to introduce his own person into the problem, yet the kingdom of God itself remained, as it always had been, the one supreme object of his thoughts.

The last question we have to ask is, how Simon came to recognize his Master as the Lord's anointed, and what he understood the title to imply? The first Gospel tells us that to Simon's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Jesus replied in a strain of solemn exaltation: "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona! for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but my Father in heaven. And I say unto thee that thou art a rock (Peter), and that on this rock I will build my community, and the gates of the realms of the dead shall be found weaker than it. And, moreover, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you forbid or permit, command or do away, on earth, it shall be confirmed by God in heaven." These words, to which the Roman Catholic Church appeals in support of the supremacy of the Pope as Peter's successor, are certainly not genuine. Jesus did not rank Simon above the rest of the Apostles, nor did he give him the name of Peter; and he never could or would have ascribed to any of his followers the power of excluding any one from the kingdom of God, or of giving out laws and ordinances.¹ The Jewish-Christian party put these words into the mouth of Jesus to glorify their special Apostle. But the passage embodies a true perception of the fact that Jesus, if not surprised, was certainly rejoiced to find that his friends had enough clearness of spiritual vision and depth of spiritual life to recognize his true greatness, to appreciate the religious significance of his work and person, and to understand his aims, unlike the expected Messiah as he was in all his outward surroundings. It was their deep affection for the Master and their fervent longing for the coming of God's kingdom that made them recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and their confession was at the same time an indirect appeal to him to assume the office. And again, the tone of authority he had lately assumed had helped to suggest the thought, and now encouraged them to utter it.

But if the confession gave Jesus cause for joy, it gave him cause for apprehension too. This was why he warned the disciples so emphatically not to tell any one that he was the Messiah, and why he took an early opportunity of expressly talking over his plans and prospects with them. For they were far from having sacrificed the carnal expectations and

¹ Compare p. 181.

ambitious dreams of their nation. They still thought of the dignity of the Messiah as political in its nature, and of the Messiah himself as an earthly king. And of course their personal interests came into play, for if their Master ascended the throne, they too would share in his exaltation. Jesus was soon to learn how deeply this false conception was rooted in their hearts.

Indeed, all the contemporaries of Jesus were so completely wedded to this idea that even the early Jewish-Christian communities could not relinquish it. One of many illustrations of this fact is preserved in a narrative contained in the first Gospel.¹ It belongs to the same class as the stories in the Apocryphal Gospels, and runs as follows:—

Some days after the events at Cæsarea Jesus was once more at Capernaum. It was just the time for collecting the tax levied in support of the temple, which amounted to two drachmas a head (about one shilling and fourpence of our money), and was paid yearly by every Jew.² The collectors, not daring to address Jesus himself, said to Peter, “ Does not your Master pay the two drachmas ? ” “ Certainly he does,” answered Peter, forgetting for the moment what was implied in his Master’s dignity as the Messiah. He went into the house to tell Jesus ; but hardly had he entered when Jesus, who knew every thing, anticipated him with the question, “ What think you, Simon ! from whom do the kings of the earth take toll and tribute, — from their own sons or from strangers ? ” “ From strangers,” answered the other. “ Then the children are free,” said Jesus (meaning, “ Then I, as the Messiah or Son of God, need not pay ”) ; “ but, not to give them offence,” he continued, “ go to the lake and throw your hook, and in the mouth of the first fish you catch you will find a stater [four drachmas]. Give it to the collectors for yourself and me.”

What a hopeless misconception underlies this argument ! Jesus cherished a spiritual conception of the office of the Messiah, which was in direst conflict with the general opinion of his people as expressed in this story and elsewhere. It stands to reason that this contrast must often have involved him in serious difficulties, and must have given rise to the severest mental conflicts.

We have dwelt at such length on the Messianic dignity of Jesus because the subject is so exceedingly important. We

¹ Matthew xvii. 24-27.

² Exodus xxx. 11 ff.

regret all the more that the condition in which our authorities have come down to us is such as to drive us now and then to conjectures. We should be so thankful for complete certainty as to the manner in which Jesus expected the kingdom of God to be established, and the place which he believed he would occupy in it as the Messiah! We would so willingly trace the development of his ideas on these matters clearly and confidently! We shall soon see that he was at any rate well aware of the danger he incurred, and was prepared for the worst. In that connection, and again later on, we shall feel how much he must have passed through before he could resolve to take this step.

But first let us open a page of the Gospels, which shows us that the early Christian communities were deeply impressed with the importance of the question how Jesus earned the title of Messiah, and that they rightly connected his Messiahship with his severest mental conflict. This conflict they represent as usual in a visible form, as an encounter between Christ and Satan. Inasmuch as they believed that Jesus was endowed by God with the Holy Spirit, and called to be the Messiah at his baptism,¹ they very naturally placed the conflict and temptation before his public ministry, in the period just after his baptism which history had left vacant.

As soon as Jesus was consecrated as the Messiah, the Spirit which had come upon him led him to the wilderness that he might be tempted by the Devil there. So must he approve himself as the Messiah. Forty days and forty nights he fasted absolutely; and when his hunger was keen the Tempter came to him and said, "If you are God's son, command these stones to become bread."² But Jesus refused. "It is written," he said, "'Man lives not by bread alone, but by all that God's word of power sends him.'"³ Baffled in his first attempt, the Devil tried another means of seducing him into faithlessness to his mission as the Messiah. He bore him through the air with the speed of thought to the City of God, and, placing him on the parapet of the temple, said, "If you are God's son, hurl yourself down; for it is written that He shall give His angels charge over you, and they shall take you in their hands that you may never strike your foot against a stone."⁴ But Jesus answered firmly, "It is also written, 'Thou shalt not try the Lord thy God, to see whether He is

¹ See pp. 117-121.

² Deuteronomy viii. 3.

³ Compare pp. 265, 266.

⁴ Psalm xcii. 11, 12.

mighty to help.'"¹ The Devil did not yet despair, but made one more vigorous attack. Again he bore him through the air, this time to a very lofty mountain, from the top of which he could see all the kingdoms of the world, with all their wealth and splendor. Over all this the Devil could dispose at will; and, as he showed his wide dominions to Jesus, he cried, "All this will I give you if you will fall down and worship me." But Jesus did not hesitate a moment. "Out of my sight, Satan!" he cried with indignant scorn; "for it is written, 'The Lord thy God shalt thou worship, and Him alone shalt thou revere.'"² Then the Devil left him, and angels drew near the victor and gave him food. It was a sign of God's approval,—the true and faithful hero's reward.

Such is the story as Matthew gives it. It is a weird scene, and is sketched with high artistic power. Luke, besides other slight alterations, changes the order of the second and third temptations. Mark simply states that the spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness, where he remained forty days, tempted all the while by Satan and surrounded by wild creatures, while the angels brought him food and drink. We may remark that the introduction of the first two temptations—"If you are God's son"—shows at once that it is as the Messiah that Jesus is tempted. It is of course absurd to ask seriously where we must place the scene of this conflict; but the barren mountain-land north-west of Jericho has been pointed out ever since the Middle Ages as the true locality. It is called "Quarantania," after the forty days Jesus is supposed to have spent in it. "The desert" is here a general designation of the abode of evil spirits, and also contains a reference to the forty years' wandering of the people of Israel, which furnished the model for this story. Its leading idea is that the Messiah triumphed over the temptations to which Israel succumbed.³ This is the meaning of the number "forty" and of the introduction of the wild creatures; but the prolonged fast during all these days is borrowed from the story of the stay of Moses on Mount Sinai.⁴

The meaning of the separate temptations is not quite clear. The first recalls the murmuring of the Israelites for want of food, when God showed that he could preserve their life without bread; that is, by other than the ordinary means,—by manna and quails. The Tempter urges Jesus to secure him-

¹ Deuteronomy vi. 16.

² Deuteronomy vi. 13.

³ Compare p. 37; and Deuteronomy viii. 2, 14-16.

⁴ Exodus xxxiv. 28; Deuteronomy ix. 8, 18.

self an existence free from care. He, the Messiah, must not suffer want! Jesus refers him to a saying of Moses, which, as he uses it, is an expression of absolute trust in God. He will provide the necessary sustenance, and while pursuing the highest purposes Jesus will lay on Him all lower cares. Hereupon the Devil lays hold of the very weapons by which his first attack has been repelled; namely, trust in God and reverence for the Scripture. He urges Jesus, as he stands on the sacred height, to risk every thing. In the fulfilment of his Messianic mission he may safely brave all dangers, and, if need be, establish the kingdom of God by force, for God must needs support him. But Jesus, unlike Israel, who tested Yahweh to see whether he would give them water at Massah, refuses thus to challenge God. The Messiah must not regard himself as protected against mortal danger by any special interposition of God. He regards such reckless presumption as a violation of the reverence due to God, and will use none but spiritual means to reach his end. Finally Satan, who is lord of the heathen world which pays him homage (for idolatry is the worship of Satan), and has established his chief seat in the world-empire of Rome, now tries to persuade the Messiah, for whom universal empire is reserved in the future, to obtain it by a shorter and an easier way than by fidelity to Israel's god,—to obtain it now at the price of forsaking God, and accommodating himself, for example, to the ideas of heathendom. But if Israel of old had yielded to this temptation and had worshipped Satan,¹ Jesus refuses to wipe out the line of sharp demarcation which separates the people of the Lord from the worshippers of demons. The splendor of Rome cannot draw away his soul from obedience to the Law and from his own sacred purposes. He will enter upon no such unhallowed compromise, but flings away the thought with horror.

The question whether this picture of the mental conflict and development of Jesus is a good one cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. In itself the conception is particularly unfortunate. For the untroubled communion of Jesus with God left no room for such morbid fancies as made a man like Luther suppose himself to be engaged in personal wrestling with the actual Devil. Moreover, the third temptation, which stamps the whole picture as of Jewish-Christian origin, shows small appreciation of the spirit of Jesus.² Finally, the position of the scene at the beginning of his

¹ Deuteronomy xxxii. 17.

² Compare pp. 229, 224 ff., 279, 280.

career, before he had the least idea of becoming the Messiah, is at variance with history. On the other hand, the first two temptations are rather happily drawn ;¹ and in the conception that Jesus “ was tempted in every thing just as we are, but without sin,”² there is a profound psychological truth which acquires special value when we consider the time at which it was uttered. For man, even for Jesus himself, there is no virtue without temptation, and no progress without dangers ever renewed. Not without sharp internal conflicts and unbroken moral effort did Jesus grow so good and great. Besides the ordinary temptations to which every man is exposed by his carnal nature and by intercourse with a sinful world ; besides the temptations of pride and ambition to which every one who stands out above his surroundings and above his age is pre-eminently liable, — we may suppose that two very special dangers threatened Jesus. The peculiar bent of his spiritual genius was such that exaggeration or one-sided development might easily hurry his religious life into fanaticism, as the history of too many prophets shows ; and the genuine enjoyment of life which characterized him as an Israelite, together with the instinct of self-preservation, made him far from indifferent to the earthly expectations of his contemporaries, more especially when he had received his call as the Messiah. We shall presently see how hard he found it, as the Messiah, to reconcile himself to the thought of possible rejection at the hands of his people ; but at present we will not dwell upon those points any longer.

Self-knowledge and incessant watchfulness and prayer enabled him to hold his own in every conflict. More specifically, his strong sense of his mission and the wonderful purity and exaltation of his purpose strengthened and defended him. He issued from temptation victorious.

¹ See pp. 168 ff.

² Hebrews iv. 15.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONFLICT AND TRIUMPH FORESEEN.

MATTHEW XVII. 10-13, XVI. 21-28.¹

WE will now take up the thread of the history again at the point at which we dropped it to weigh the significance of the fact that the Twelve greeted their Master as the future Messiah.

They had shown that they felt his greatness, and they had been initiated into his most secret thoughts. The natural consequence was that Jesus lived henceforth on a footing of closer intimacy with them than ever. If for the present they were to keep what had taken place a profound secret from the outer world, henceforth there were to be no secrets in their own inner circle. Jesus could now impart to them without reserve his plans and expectations, and, indeed, he was bound to do so for more reasons than one. Not only must his line of conduct very seriously affect their future lot, but they were, as already said, still slaves to their national prejudices, and in the utmost need of further enlightenment.

We still have records of several conversations on subjects connected with the Messiah, sometimes started by Jesus himself, and sometimes by the disciples. For instance, on one occasion they asked him the very natural question, "When the Scribes tell us that before the foundation of the Messianic kingdom Elijah must appear, are they mistaken?" To which Jesus answered, "They are right in saying that Elijah comes first and makes all things ready in Israel. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, but they did not know him; and in the blindness of their passion they persecuted him. And the same lot awaits the Son of Man at their hands." The disciples knew that he was speaking of the Baptist, and indeed he afterwards plainly declared, "John was the man of whom we read, 'Behold! I send my messenger before your face to prepare your way before you.' If you will believe me when I say it, he is the Elijah that was to come!"²

The Master to share the fate of John! How utterly amazed must the Twelve have been to hear such a declara-

¹ Luke ix. 22-27; Mark ix. 11-13, viii. 31-ix. 1.

² See p. 256.

tion ! But for that very reason Jesus constantly returned to the subject from the moment when they acknowledged him as the Messiah at Cæsarea Philippi. During the last few weeks or months before the Passover he was much alone with them, and had many opportunities of speaking of this matter to them. He soon began : according to the Gospels it was in the decisive hour of the confession itself. He laid before them in the clearest possible light how the path that he must tread had been pointed out to him, and whither it led. He must go to Jerusalem. So much at least was certain. Not only had his work been harassed of late, and his very life endangered in his fatherland, but the hour had come for him to leave the secluded regions of Galilee and advance to the capital itself, there to announce the kingdom of God and force on the decision for which his cause was ripe. Not only a chance-collected crowd, but all Israel must hear from his own lips what he had to offer, and must choose whether to accept it or no. Though many of the religious leaders more especially had already declared against him, yet he must make the whole nation hear his appeal and choose whether it would forsake its ambitious dreams, forsake its soulless forms and worship of the letter, and accept the kingdom of God he preached with all its inexhaustible spiritual blessings. The city of the Lord, the heart of Israel, was the appointed place for this great trial, and the thrice-glorious festival of the Passover was the appointed time. For there and then, what with the worshippers that came from every part of Palestine and the pilgrims that streamed in from "the dispersion," the people might be said to be present collectively.

So far Jesus doubtless carried with him the hearty approbation of his friends. Where but at Jerusalem, when but at the great feast, should the kingdom of the Messiah be established? But this was not in all respects what their Master anticipated. When he reached Jerusalem, as he went on to explain to them, the chances would be still heavier against him than in Galilee. He would have no choice but to assert his utmost claims at once and risk every thing ; so that failure would involve the most disastrous results, and would be almost sure to cost him his life. Of course he could not be certain of the issue. He was certain of one thing only ; and that was that whatever came to pass would be the will of God, and that even the saddest result in the eyes of men would become under God's ruling power the most blessed both for him and for the kingdom of God. But at that moment, as he

declared to his disciples, he fully expected that his preaching would find no entrance and wake no echo in the hearts of the great majority ; that his efforts would meet with no sympathy and no support ; and that when once rejected, and accused by the authorities of attacking the ancestral religion, he would pay for his failure with his life.

He tried in many ways to show them how probable it was that such a fate was impending over him. Jerusalem was the great school of orthodoxy ; and the hostile encounter he had already had with the Scribes who came thence to Galilee to observe and question him, showed him distinctly enough what he had to expect in the capital itself, and its significance could hardly have been missed by the disciples.¹ As for the Sadducees, who held the helm of the state, they were so selfishly and doggedly conservative that they would certainly do their best to put the reformer, with his promise of God's kingdom, as quickly as possible out of the way. The general public, alas ! was too shallow and fickle to be in any way relied upon. And were not his recent experiences — the repeated necessity of retreat, and the threats to which his very life had been exposed — a significant prelude to what was yet in store ? Above all, did not his predecessor's fate foreshadow his own ? And did not sacred history show by the common fate of the prophets of old that such an issue of his labors, such a reception of the word of God he uttered, was but natural ?² Let them consult the Scripture, and they would find that the servant of the Lord would be scorned by every one, that the shepherd would be smitten, and much more that pointed in the same direction. Would it not prove to be the will of God that the Messiah should go to the City of the Temple, that he should join in open conflict with the established powers, and that he, being the weaker, should fall ?

Yes, fall ! but not for ever.

Such, we imagine, was the drift of many long discourses addressed by Jesus to his faithful friends. He wished to lead them by the way which he had trodden to the conclusion he had reached. He could not give up all hopes that when the crisis came the assembled people might yet make the blessed choice ; that God might incline their hearts to him and bring wondrous things to pass : but he felt that he must firmly push these hopes into the background, and on his own account, as well as that of his friends, accurately observe and resolutely

¹ Compare pp. 124, 275 ff.

² See pp. 48, 292.

insist upon the gloomy prospect of defeat. Not that he was shaken for a moment in his determination to go up to Jerusalem ! On that point he was resolved, though he must walk right into the lion's den. Nay, even if he had had no single gleam of hope, if he had known with infallible certainty that it would cost his life,—even then he must and would have gone. Where duty commanded, where God called, there he knew no fear or hesitation ; there no sacrifice was too heavy for him. He had always taken every reasonable precaution against danger, and had on several occasions retreated to avoid his enemies ; but it was for the Messianic kingdom and not for his own sake that he had spared his life, and now he was ready to risk it in that same cause. He commended the result to God, and knew that it was in good hands.

He had not the shadow of a doubt that if his blood must be poured out it would only be as the price that must be paid for the establishment of the kingdom and the inauguration of the blessed age. The obstinate resistance offered to the truth he preached would put an end to itself at the moment that it struck him down, and his rejection would lead to his supremacy. And so, however sad the subject of which he spoke to his friends might sometimes appear, the conclusion was never a gloomy one. Let the clouds gather never so darkly, there was always light behind them. Whatever vicissitudes and conflicts awaited him, his triumph would be sure and speedy ! God, the almighty Father, was faithful ; and if for a moment he appeared to be defeated, it would soon be seen that his apparent defeat was his real victory. After three days¹ he would rise again from his fall.

Such was ever the conclusion of his discourses on this subject. Trodden under foot he would soon rise again, and rise victorious. But this was not enough to reconcile his friends to the prospect of a temporary defeat. A Messiah rejected by his people was an idea that flatly contradicted all their opinions and beliefs ; was an insoluble riddle, an inexplicable contradiction, a simple impossibility. Their Messiah — and there was no other! — was to be a king ; and God, the Lord, would make all his adversaries bow before him, or would crush them to powder ! But though they exchanged perplexed and astonished glances, none of them dared to speak but one. It was the same who a short time before had made himself the mouthpiece of them all, and had been the first to take the name of Messiah on his lips. Had Simon,

¹ Compare p. 275, and Hosea vi. 2; 2 Kings xx. 5, 8; Matthew xxvi. 61.

listening intently to his Master, caught something in his tone, some indescribable indication in his manner, that gave him courage to speak? Did he feel by a kind of inspiration, he knew not how, that Jesus himself had had great difficulty in believing and accepting it as a fact that suffering and death in all probability awaited him, the future Messiah? At any rate he could not let such words pass unchallenged, and took the first opportunity of endeavoring to bring Jesus to other thoughts. He drew him aside, and, forgetting even the respect he owed to him, began to take him seriously to task. "God forbid it!" he cried. "No, Lord! this shall not be; indeed it shall not!" He was far from wishing Jesus to abandon his intention of going to Jerusalem, but he wished him to banish these gloomy forebodings. Why should he keep forcing himself to think that he might have to sacrifice his life in the good cause? He was not only giving himself needless pain, but was showing a want of trust that might produce disastrous results. He must look for better things, and as the Anointed of the Lord must prepare himself for a very different fate from that — But Jesus would not let him finish. He shook him off impetuously, and turning his back upon him cried, "Out of my sight, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me, for you seek not the will of God, but the things desired by men."

Why all this vehemence? When have we ever seen him so severe before? It was in self-preservation that he spoke. He felt that, unless he flung away the thought at once with all the power he could muster, the temptation might become too strong for him. For his conception of the future was but new even to himself, and he had only gained it at the cost of a hard-won victory over himself. And so when Simon, overlooking the demands of a stern sense of duty, overlooking God's call to self-sacrifice for the kingdom's sake, threw in his voice with the selfish longing for life, for power, for enjoyment, and would confirm the national prejudices of the Jews as to the Messiah and his kingdom, it seemed to him as though the Evil One himself had crept up to his side to seduce him into falsehood to himself and disobedience to God. And his apprehension of the toilsome, painful task that he expected was so great, his natural inclinations were pleading so strongly with him already, that he feared the unhallowed counsel of his friend might draw him but too easily aside should he permit himself to hear it. So by one firm, quick stroke he silenced the tempter's voice, and was rescued!

He was safe for ever against the danger that had threatened him at that moment. Never again would any of his disciples strive to divert the current of his thoughts. Once more, while still in Galilee, he spoke in the same strain of dark presentiment. The first Gospel says that the disciples were sad, the other two that they could not understand him ; but in either case they dared not question him again.¹ And so what seemed but now to be his vulnerable point was covered against all future attacks by that one brief but glorious effort. His apprehension rather increased than diminished ; but after his victory over what was perhaps the severest temptation of his life, his self-surrender to the Father's will was more complete than ever.

We need not wonder that even when Jesus was no longer with the Twelve alone, but was addressing a wider circle of his followers, his preaching henceforth bore the unmistakable impress of what had occurred within the closer circle. He was more urgent than ever in his demand for complete self-consecration and self-sacrifice, and at the same time he opened out the prospect of the richest compensation and the fulfilment of the fairest hopes in the immediate future. "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me ! For whosoever seeks to save his life shall lose it, but whosoever loses his life shall find it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul in gaining it ? Or what can a man give in ransom for his soul ? For if any one is ashamed of me and of my words in the midst of this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man shall be ashamed of him when he comes with the light of his Father's glory shining about him and surrounded by the holy angels !"² When he comes ! — And when would he come ? "I tell you of a truth there are some here present who shall witness it ; some who shall see with their own eyes the Son of Man coming in all his kingly splendor !" It was a glorious promise to his faithful followers !

These sayings of Jesus to his trusted companions, or to the wider circle of his followers, are preserved with varying degrees of accuracy by the several Gospels. Thus Matthew, instead of simply making the Son of Man refuse to recognize as his own those who dare not declare in his favor now, makes him appear as the judge of all the world and "recom

¹ Matthew xvii. 22, 23 (Mark ix. 30-32; Luke ix. 43-45).

² See pp. 176, 187-190.

pense every man according to his works." This ascription of the office of judge to the Messiah is of later origin, and is entirely foreign to the ideas of Jesus himself. Luke and Mark, on the other hand, substitute the coming of the kingdom of God for that of the Son of Man. In all alike the form of the sayings is affected by subsequent events. Thus they speak of "bearing the cross;"¹ they understand the expectation which Jesus expressed of a final triumph as though it were a prophecy of his own resurrection from the realm of shades, which is certainly a misconception; and above all they make Jesus not only anticipate sufferings in general, but specifically and emphatically predict his condemnation by the Sanhedrim; and they make him not only look upon his death as possible, but announce it as irrevocably decreed by God. Now we know that as a fact he cherished to the very last some faint hopes, though ever fainter, that such a sacrifice might not be required of him. Indeed the constant recurrence of these hopes furnishes the only possible explanation of the complete failure of all his warnings to produce any real impression on his friends, who magnified the hopes, set aside the apprehensions, and to the very last fully expected a brilliant victory. It is even possible that we have ourselves represented the Master's anticipations as more uniformly gloomy than they really were; and at any rate we may safely assume that brighter expectations and more cheerful hopes from time to time relieved his sad forebodings. But all this affects little more than the form of these sayings. Their substance is certainly genuine.

But what does all this mean? We are told in the same breath that Jesus is the Messiah, and that in all probability sufferings and death await him! The disciples might well be amazed; and we too may ask with them, Can these two things by any possibility be reconciled? What comes of the Messiahship of Jesus? Is it a mere phantom? The kingdom of heaven, as we know, was to be established here on earth. Was it, after all, to have no human king? In that case there would be no Messiah; and how could Jesus be the Messiah if there was none?

Our Gospels offer a solution of this riddle which appears to us when first we hear it so strange as to be absolutely impossible to accept. We have come across it in the last-mentioned utterances of Jesus, in which he is made to say,

¹ See p. 189

"Though I should die, I come again ; and then I come as the Messiah. I come again with heavenly glory ; and then shall the kingdom of God be perfected." Now we know that the Apostles and all the Christians of the first century looked forward with the firmest trust and the most fervent longing to the return of Jesus to assume the Messiahship. There is hardly a page of the New Testament that does not mention this expectation. But did Jesus himself share it? Can he who was so free from all fanaticism, from all capricious excesses of the fancy, can he have imagined such a thing to be true? It is certain, at any rate, that few of his utterances on this subject have come down to us unaltered ; for oral tradition, which delighted in busying itself in this matter above all others, has sometimes disguised them past recognition, and very often modified them.¹ But their number is so great that we can hardly set them all aside, and the authenticity of some few can scarcely be questioned. The unanimity of the apostolic tradition, too, is best explained on the supposition that the Master not only foretold the triumph of his cause and the advent of the kingdom of God in spite of the violence of the opposition and in consequence of his own devotion, but also spoke of his own personal share in the triumph and joy of the kingdom, even should his life be sacrificed in founding it. We must indeed admit that without some such return his title and dominion, his connection with his work, his followers, and his kingdom would be little more than nominal. And when we look at it more closely, the thought, "I shall come again!" is not so unnatural as it appeared, and is at any rate far from fanatical. We must begin by putting completely on one side our own conception of an eternal life of all the pious dead in heaven. This idea was quite foreign to the Israelites in the time of Jesus, as well as previously. Heaven they regarded as the dwelling-place of God and of the angels only ; or if by a rare exception some very few of the sons of men dwelt there, it was but for a time. The dead went down to the realm of shades, whence, when the kingdom of God was established, the pious would rise to live here on earth once more. Nor have we any reason to suppose that Jesus himself believed in the endless abode of all the pious in heaven rather than in their renewed life upon earth ; for as far as such modes of thought and conception are concerned, he too was a child of his times. Now a belief had prevailed ever since the

¹ Compare John xxi. 23; 2 Thessalonians ii. 1 ff.

Maccabæan war of independence, and had been greatly strengthened by the insurrection of Judas the Galilæan, that loss of life in the service of the Lord was the sure way to a glorious resurrection at the dawn of the golden age.¹ Bearing all this in mind, can we wonder that when Jesus had resolved to take up the task and assume the dignity of the Messiah, when he foresaw or at least suspected that the kingdom of heaven must in all likelihood be founded in his blood, he said to himself and his friends, “When all is finished I shall come again, and then it will be as the Messiah”?

But it may still be asked, Suppose Jesus did believe that in case he must die he would yet return to earth before his own generation had died out, where did he suppose that he would be between the hour of his death and that of his return? This brings us to a very difficult question. We have supposed, in opposition to very many and very excellent scholars, that Jesus entertained and uttered the belief that in any case he should personally share the glories of the heavenly kingdom here on earth,—should be the first of its citizens, reverenced by all the rest as their leader. But it does not follow that he really used the language almost always attributed to him in the New Testament: “I shall come again in divine splendor on the clouds.”

We dare not give a decided answer to the question whether Jesus ever used such expressions as this. Inasmuch as Scripture and tradition declared that Enoch, Moses, and Elijah had been provisionally received by God into heaven, it is possible that Jesus really expected not to remain in the realm of shades, but to be taken into heaven till his return to earth. It appears that the early Christians extended the privilege to all their martyrs. If Jesus really cherished such a hope, it was probably dictated by his longing for a life of unbroken communion with God. In this case, the Gospels are correct in making him speak of his return, not from the realms of the dead, but from on high.

But again, this belief in the return of Jesus was the central point round which all the thoughts, the hopes, and the efforts of the apostolic age revolved; and, since the belief in the Master’s resurrection from the shadow-land and ascension to heaven naturally carried with it the conception of his return from the realms of glory rather than from the shadow-land, it is very possible that the anticipation of that event was first put into his lips in its present form in the apostolic age, since

¹ Daniel xii. 2, 3; 2 Maccabees vii. 9, 14, 23; compare Matthew xvi. 25.

the Christians could not suffer the smallest difference of belief on so important a subject to subsist between themselves and their Master. In favor of this opinion, it may be urged that we never find any direct indication that Jesus supposed himself to be an exception to the general rule in this respect. Another reason for doubting whether his thoughts were ever definitely engaged on this subject, and whether he distinctly declared, "The Son of Man shall come upon the clouds, in the light of his Father's glory," may be found in the fact that to the last he retained some hope of seeing his efforts crowned with success without the bitter extremity of trial. We are therefore unable to determine the extent to which tradition has worked up or modified his utterances on this subject. But we may safely declare that he confided his own future, as well as all things else, in perfect trust to the Father.

We have now concluded a survey which throws considerable light upon some of the sayings of the last period of the preaching of Jesus. Let us glance back over it, and compare it with the results of our former inquiries as to the gospel of the kingdom which he preached at his first appearance and during the earlier period of his Galilean ministry.¹ On making this comparison, it is impossible to deny that the unfavorable reception Jesus had met, in such sharp contrast to the first appearance of success, disappointed him so bitterly as to cause an inevitable change in his conduct, his plans, and his prospects, and to place his person and his preaching before us in quite a different light from that in which they appeared during those early months. He still appears as pure, as great, as exalted as ever, and indeed his figure seems still bolder and more striking than before; but something of the winning gentleness is gone. At first his preaching had been "glad tidings" in the fullest sense; but at the close of his career, on the way to Jerusalem, in the City of the Temple, warnings and threatenings take an ever more prominent place in his teaching, and the last judgment, which he had previously passed over almost in silence, is the frequent topic of his discourses.² He had previously laid chief stress upon the preparation, upon the gradual establishment of the kingdom of God, upon the imperceptible conquests of his new principle in the hearts of men until it leavened all society; but now the consummation by an act of God, — a great revolution in the world, carrying terror to the unbelievers and the uncon-

¹ See p. 151. ² Compare pp. 259, 279, 301-303, and chap. xxviii. p. 347

verted,—comes into prominence. In that day he is to come again, to receive his spiritual supremacy, no longer disputed by any creature, and unlimited by time or space.

There is an unquestionable loss involved in this change, but it is compensated by the heroism of the deed that Jesus was resolved to do. It was a giant's task which he laid upon himself when he resolved to make the kingdom come. But he did not shrink from the supreme sacrifice. He never lost his faith in God, in himself, in humanity, or in the future. He had resolved to be the Messiah, and straightway to establish the Messianic kingdom.

To Jerusalem, then !



CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM.

MARK X. 1-31; LUKE XIII. 22-25.¹

MOST likely Jesus and his friends only stayed a short time in the extreme north of the land. Thence they returned to Capernaum ; but Jesus neither preached nor made himself known in any of the cities or villages through which they passed. He desired to remain unknown, both to avoid the risk of being harassed by his enemies, and to enjoy the opportunity of uninterrupted intercourse with the Twelve. We can easily guess the subjects to which his conversation and teaching were now principally addressed.²

His public ministry in Galilee was now at an end. He seems to have spent a few days at Capernaum again, perhaps to arrange his affairs or take leave of his friends before setting out on his journey ; but even there we only find him in the company of his disciples, and no longer addressing the multitudes. He had some hard but very needful lessons still to teach his friends. For instance, when they were disputing for precedence in the approaching kingdom of God, he rebuked their self-assertion and petty jealousy, and commanded them to put away these headstrong thoughts and become simple and receptive as children,—dwelling at the same time, with the strongest emphasis, on the high dignity

¹ Matthew xix; Luke xviii. 15-30.

² Mark ix. 33 a, 30, 31.

and worth of “the little ones.” Here the Gospels insert his warnings against “causes of offence ;” that is to say, every unhallowed connection that had been or might be contracted, every evil disposition which had been cherished or suffered to exist, — every thing, in short, which might lead to faithlessness and desertion of the good cause. Here, too, they place among other sayings his exhortations to unbounded forgiveness.¹

After this, he left his native country never to see it more. The general stream of pilgrims from Galilee usually took the shortest way to Jerusalem, through Engannim, Shechem, and Ephraim, about three days’ journey ; but Jesus preferred the more circuitous route through Peræa. We can only guess his reason. It can hardly have been the dread of rough treatment from the Samaritans, still less any aversion to them. Nor can it have been a desire to avoid the numerous caravans of Galilæans journeying to the City of the Temple in high-wrought expectancy and with cries of joy and triumph ; for though on these occasions there were always some who took the opportunity of visiting Jerusalem a few weeks before the feast, yet the great mass of pilgrims only came when it was close at hand, — and we have reason to suppose that it was quite early in the spring as yet. But there was time enough to take the less frequented way ; and since Jesus was anxious to avoid all possibility of exciting popular commotions on his journey, the present disposition of his followers seemed to make it unadvisable for him to pass through the thickly populated district of southern Galilee.

For he was now surrounded, not only by his little circle of friends, but by a more considerable band of followers, probably drawn for the most part from the cities of the lake, and including several women.² Their number was not large, and Jesus had not drawn them together purposely ; but they had hardly heard of his intended journey before they resolved to accompany him. Was he going to Jerusalem ? Then they would go there too. Now such an escort was in many ways desirable, and indeed the Master’s personal safety almost demanded it ; but it required watchful supervision, for it was obvious to them all that some extraordinary event was in the immediate future. Though Jesus had strictly forbidden the Twelve to speak of him as the future Messiah, yet it was easy to observe a significant change in their bearing towards him

¹ See pp. 191, 160–163, 174; compare also Matthew v. 29, 30.

² Matthew xx. 17, xxvii. 55; Luke xix. 37, xxiii. 49.

and in the way in which they spoke of him to others ; nor did Jesus himself attempt to conceal from his followers that the highest interests were involved in this journey, and that it stood in some immediate connection with the coming of the kingdom of God. So the brightest expectations filled their hearts as they went with him to Jerusalem. Would the Messianic age, of which he himself had foretold the speedy advent with such emphasis and in such consoling words, now really come ?

Since we have no trustworthy information whatever as to the time at which Jesus left Galilee or at which he arrived at the capital, we must be content with mere conjectures. Now various conversations and occurrences are reported as taking place in the course of the journey, which seem to show that it was by no means hurried. And again, we can hardly force all that occurred at Jerusalem into the space of a single week. It appears, therefore, that Jesus wisely determined to be in the city some three weeks at least before the festival, in order to make himself acquainted with the ground, and to establish himself firmly there before the great streams of pilgrims poured into Jerusalem. Most of these pilgrims came a week in advance, in order to observe certain ceremonies of so-called purification ; and for Jesus and his company to arrive at the same time might have been dangerous, considering the general excitement that prevailed. It seemed advisable on every ground to be beforehand.

For these reasons we may suppose that it was more than a month before the Passover when Jesus embarked at Capernaum and crossed the lake. Disembarking on the south-eastern coast, he passed through Hippus into the valley of the Jordan, which he followed southwards with the river on his right, until, just above Beth-Haran, he reached the ford on the way to Jericho, from which the city was about two hours' journey distant. So far it had not been a pleasant journey. The floor of the Jordan Valley is from seven to ten miles broad, and something over sixty miles in length, from the lake of Gennesareth to the Dead Sea. It lies so low that in summer the heat is unendurable. Even in the evening and at night the close and heavy atmosphere is hardly cooled, and the whole appearance of the valley is parched and dry. It was, therefore, for the most part thinly populated and far from fertile. In the early spring-time, however, as the river poured its boisterous waters to the south and often overflowed its banks, the region may have seemed far fresher and more

pleasant than in summer ; but even then it can have had but little life or variety to display, while the two long chains of white and barren limestone rocks that skirted it on either side shut out the prospect everywhere. Not till the traveller reached the little plain of Jericho, about eight miles long and two and a half across, was the monotony of his journey relieved by a delightful surprise. Here the eye rested all at once on a spot most richly blessed by Nature. It was full of beautiful pleasure-grounds, where the luxuriance and variety of the flowers rivalled the richness of the pasturage and the excellence of the trees and shrubs. In a word, it was known throughout the world as a little paradise.

As Jesus passed through the monotonous valley and the smiling plain, who shall say what a host of thoughts crowded into his mind ! When last he sought the regions of the southern Jordan, it was to hear the Baptist before his own ministry began. It was hardly more than a few months ago, but it seemed like a lifetime, so much had happened in the interval ! And now, how vividly his predecessor stood before him once again, preaching of the judgment ! But as to all those reminiscences our Gospels preserve the profoundest silence. They tell us only of the glances Jesus cast into the future and the occurrences upon the journey. All these we should have to place on the soil of Judah itself were we literally to follow the first and second Gospels. But this representation can hardly be correct. We shall give the several events in the order in which they occur in the Gospels, but shall set aside as wholly unworthy of credit the statement that Jesus addressed the people here also “as his custom was,” and healed the multitudes that followed him. Moreover, in speaking of the task of the Messiah and of the judgment, we shall now and then insert a saying of Jesus which the Gospels give elsewhere, but which appears to us to fall most suitably into this period.

The first occurrence recorded on the journey is a hostile encounter with certain Pharisees, who either lived in Perea or were passing through it with a purpose similar to that of Jesus himself. They had doubtless heard how audaciously Jesus attacked the holy commandments, and either to convince themselves personally of the truth of the report, or else on purpose to involve him in opposition to the Law, they asked him, “Is it allowable for a man to put away his wife?”

Why did they select this point of attack above all others? It appears that Jesus had already expressed himself on the subject with publicity and emphasis. At any rate Luke has preserved a detached saying referring to it which has also found its way into the Sermon on the Mount, in the series of contrasts between the old and the new principles which we have already examined.¹ It is there provided with the usual introduction, and runs: “It has been said, ‘Whoever puts away his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’² But I say that whoever puts away his wife is the cause of the adultery that he who afterwards marries her commits with her.”³ The law and usage of Israel on the subject of divorce had been instituted to check still grosser excesses of Oriental licentiousness; and how deeply the moral sense of Jesus must have been revolted by seeing that they were made the excuse for unheard-of levity, — nay, for shameless immorality in contracting and dissolving marriage! The text of Deuteronomy referred to allowed of divorce in case a man had discovered “any thing improper” in his wife; and since this expression is exceedingly elastic, the Scribes were far from unanimous as to its interpretation. Shammai and his followers held that divorce was never allowable except when a wife had been unfaithful to her husband; but others thought that her appearance in the street without a veil, or with her neck bare, was enough. Hillel and his followers actually maintained that a man might divorce his wife if she burned his dinner or made it too salt; and Rabbi Akiba, one of Hillel’s most celebrated successors, thought it reason enough for a man to divorce his wife if he preferred another woman! In any case the husband was the sole judge of his own cause, and the wife could never demand a separation. Of this last fact Mark, who was better acquainted with Roman than with Jewish habits in this matter, was not aware.⁴ We may imagine how women were humiliated by such customs, how deeply the institution of marriage was degraded, and what fatal results to education and domestic life must necessarily follow.

Jesus, as we should have expected, had a very decided answer ready for these Pharisees: “Have you never read in the Scripture that the Creator made man male and female in the beginning, and said, ‘Therefore shall a man forsake his father and mother to cleave to his wife; and these two shall

¹ See pp. 226 ff.

² Deuteronomy xxiv. 1.

³ Luke xvi. 18; Matthew v. 31, 32, after an amended text.

⁴ Mark x. 12.

be one'?¹ They are inseparably one, and the caprice of man may not sever those whom the will of God has joined!" But this appeal to the state of things before the promulgation of the Law neither silenced nor convinced the Pharisees. "Then would you have it go for nothing," they retorted sharply, "that Moses expressly ordained divorce by means of a written bill?" "It was only because of your dulness of soul," said Jesus, in a tone of lofty rebuke, "that Moses permitted you to put away your wives. It was not so in the beginning. And I tell you, whoever puts away his wife and marries another is an adulterer; and so is any one who marries a woman that her husband has divorced."

The Pharisees withdrew in indignation at this audacious rupture with the Law of the Lord. But even the disciples, among whom Simon was certainly not the only married man, were astonished and alarmed. This need not surprise us. Perhaps when Jesus had spoken on the subject before they had paid no special attention to what he said. At any rate, they had never before seen the matter in the light in which he had put it now, and his rule was in direct contradiction to public opinion and to all the usages of society. We can easily see that it was dictated by a very lofty conception of marriage itself, and was inspired by a deep faith in mankind and in the future. With his eye upon the approaching kingdom of God, Jesus could no longer consent to a compromise, or make terms with an unclean passion.² Early Christianity, however, which fell so far short of the Master's exaltation of spirit, soon thought it necessary to temper the strictness of his command; and in two of the four passages that refer to the subject (the two which occur in Matthew), the absolute prohibition of divorce is modified by the insertion of the words, "unless the woman has committed adultery." This reservation, which was quite at variance with the intention of Jesus, produced a corresponding change in the question of the Pharisees, who were now made to ask whether a man might put away his wife "for every cause." The Roman Catholic Church, on the contrary, maintains, at least in theory, that marriage cannot be annulled. But to return to the disciples. In the first Gospel we are told that when the controversy was over they said to the Master, "If it is true that a man can never under any circumstances put away his wife, the most prudent course is not to marry at all!" Jesus did not stay to refute this timorous deduction, but gave a fresh

¹ Genesis ii. 24.

² Compare p. 227

turn to the discourse by admitting that in some cases, apart from those in which marriage was physically impossible, it might be best to abstain from it. It might be a necessary sacrifice to the kingdom of God. There had been and there still were those whom a deep sense of their own special mission urged to sacrifice wedded love, domestic happiness, and all the pleasures of life in order that they might consecrate their undivided powers to the highest interests of man. But for this a special sense of duty, a special strength of will and intensity of faith, and great self-command and self-denial were needed.

So said Jesus; and we listen to his words on this subject with extremest interest. It need hardly be said that, though he appealed to the authority of the Scripture in his controversy with the Pharisees, yet the views of marriage which brought him once more into conflict with the religion of his people were not founded upon a text of the Bible. On the contrary, if the text in Genesis was for him, that in Deuteronomy was against him! It was in view of man's original disposition, which revealed the Creator's will, that he maintained the purely moral nature and the divine origin of marriage, and as a consequence its sanctity and indissolubility. From this the dignity and rights of woman and the lofty significance and function of family life follow as a natural consequence. But in the same breath, as it were, with which he maintains all this, he goes on to demand inexorably the sacrifice of every thing, if need be, to principle. On this very journey we catch the echo both of his high appreciation of domestic life and of his conviction that all things must be sacrificed for the kingdom of God's sake.

His experiences upon the way were not always painful. Thus we are told that once, when he had gone into a house, certain parents came with their children in their arms or walking at their sides. It was easy to see what they wanted. Sometimes parents would bring their children to the synagogue for the superintendent or one of the rabbis to ask a blessing on their heads; and so these people had brought their little ones to the prophet of Nazareth with a feeling that the very touch of such a holy man of God must have some special power in it. But the disciples, who were beginning to feel their own importance and who would not have their Master disturbed for such a trivial cause, turned them away with some harshness; and they were just going back disappointed, when fortunately Jesus saw what was taking place.

He was exceedingly displeased with his disciples, and said, “Let the children come to me and forbid them not! Verily the kingdom of heaven is of such as they.” When he had thus rebuked the disciples, the parents came boldly to him, and he took the little ones upon his knee or in his arms, and embraced them and kissed them. Then he laid his hands upon them, and prayed for a blessing on them, and sent them away happy.

“The kingdom of heaven is of such as they.” What did he mean by these words? He may have meant that—sad experience having taught him how dull of heart the grown-up people round him were — his chief hopes for the kingdom of God were now built upon the rising generation, whose innocence and freedom from prejudice made them so precious in the heavenly Father’s eye. Or else, as Mark and Luke would have it, he meant that no one can enter into the kingdom of God unless he becomes as simple as a child. On more than one occasion when Jesus speaks of children, it is exceedingly difficult to say whether he means to be understood literally or only refers to the simple, the weak, the lowly, and those of whom the world takes no account.¹ In any case, this winning scene of Jesus blessing the little children crowns and confirms his views of marriage and domestic life.

But most of the conversations and occurrences of this journey had, as we should expect, some direct reference to the kingdom of God. Inasmuch as the disciples’ minds were filled with thoughts of the great events now near at hand, their disposition could not fail to exercise an influence upon those with whom they came in contact. Thus a certain man once came to Jesus and asked him, anxiously, whether there were not very few who would be saved at the last judgment and would share the salvation of the Messianic age. His answer was an exhortation to all who heard him to increased moral effort. “Strive with all your might to gain an entrance at the narrow door; for I tell you that many shall seek in vain to enter by it. When the master of the house has received his guests and welcomed them, and has risen and closed the door, then you may begin to knock from outside, and cry, ‘Lord! open to us!’ but he will answer, ‘I know not whence you are!’”

On another occasion, when a question of similar import was addressed to him, his answer showed that the effort he

¹ See pp. 163, 174.

required included the voluntary renunciation of every thing which could hold back the heart from its sacred mission. The circumstances were as follows: He was met upon his way by one who bowed down before him reverently and said, "Good Master, what must I do to secure eternal life in the kingdom of God?" There was something in the words themselves, or in the man who uttered them, which pleased Jesus,—something which spoke of straightforward purity and simplicity, earnestness and trust; but there was also a certain air of self-satisfaction about the man, which argued a superficial conception on his part of the requirements of the moral life, and warned Jesus against making the smallest concession to his weakness. So he began by condemning the careless use of such a word as *good*, which, rightly considered, implied nothing less than absolute perfection: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God. You know the commandments,—not to commit adultery, not to murder, not to steal, not to bear false witness, to defraud no man, to honor your father and mother." What did he mean by this answer? That every man would be judged according to his light?—or that the Ten Commandments, properly carried out, embraced the whole moral law? Or did he wish to draw from the other a declaration of what his conduct hitherto had been? However this may be, the man answered, "All this I have observed from childhood." The frank, straightforward air with which he made this declaration won the heart of Jesus, and, in hopes of discovering the man to himself and at the same time winning him finally for the kingdom of God, he said, with all the force and persuasion of which he was master, "You still lack one thing. Sell all you have and give the money to the poor. Then you will have a treasure laid up for you by God when the kingdom of heaven comes; and do you meanwhile come and follow me." Alas! the demand was too hard for him, for he was very rich. He could not break the ties which bound him to the world. He could spare much for the great salvation, but not all. Deeply cast down, perhaps more at his own weakness than any thing else, he went away in a far other frame of mind than that in which he had come.

The version of the story we have given is that of Mark and Luke, the latter of whom describes the interrogator as "a ruler." Matthew calls him a young man, whence the story is commonly described as that of "the rich young man." This is not the only point in which the first Gospel departs from

the others. For instance, it seemed strange, and even shocking, that Jesus should have expressly repudiated the title of honor, "good," and consequently Matthew simply omits it altogether.¹ Again, he lays the chief stress upon the fulfilment of the precepts of the Law in simple love to one's neighbor as the condition of citizenship in the kingdom of God, while Mark and Luke emphasize the breaking of all worldly ties to follow Jesus. But in the essential points our authorities are all agreed.

Now Jesus had never demanded such a sacrifice before. Even the Twelve had never been required to sell their property and give away the money. We must bear it carefully in mind that he was by no means uttering a general precept, but was speaking with special reference to the individual requirements of the man who stood before him, and to the critical importance of the time, which would less than ever brook the smallest indecision. It was this that raised his demands so high. The eye, the hand, the foot that caused offence must be plucked out or hewn off.² It seems that the result, in this special instance, was a painful disappointment to Jesus himself. At least, when the man was gone he looked round upon his disciples and said with a sigh, "How hard it is for those that have riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven!" And in answer to their look of amazement he repeated, "Beloved, what a mighty effort is required to secure an entrance!³ I tell you again, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." "Worse and worse!" thought the disciples. "He said it was hard before, but now he says it is impossible." "Who will be saved then?" they whispered to one another in the utmost consternation. Jesus heard, and looking significantly upon them said, "Yes; to man it is impossible, but not to God; for every thing is possible to God."

We can see what Jesus meant. These last words express the thought which sustained him in all his disappointments, and which the experience of his own soul was ever confirming. It is, in truth, beyond the power of man to secure for himself or others an entrance into the kingdom of heaven; but it is here that God's almighty power is displayed. Jesus, however, was not proclaiming the dogma of divine

¹ After an amended text.

² Compare pp. 168 ff., 174 ff., 187 ff.

³ After a better reading of Mark x. 24.

omnipotence, but was simply stating what the life of his own soul had taught him; namely, that God can enable us to make the greatest sacrifices,—to renounce ourselves absolutely,—to accomplish what would be utterly impossible without him; that the man whose heart God has once stirred cannot in the long run resist the impulse of his spirit, the impulse of sacred love. He spoke, of course, in part to encourage his followers and direct them to man's only refuge in conscious weakness and impotence; but he spoke yet more to quicken his own hope,—for he had felt, and surely not for the first time, the unhallowed power of gold, and much as he longed to rescue this man from his slavery to the world, he found that he was powerless. "How many good hearts," he thought, "are only held back by wealth and distinction from joining me! But God's power, I know, is greater than any worldly influence. He can break these chains, and He will!"

Meanwhile the disciples had partially recovered from their consternation, and Peter, perhaps with some lingering hesitation in his voice, began: "But we have left every thing to follow you." It was as though he would say, "Surely, *we* are safe?" Naturally, Jesus was more than ever inclined at this moment to value their devotion; so he answered, with warm affection, "I tell you truly, every one who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake, shall be compensated many fold even now in this present time; and when the day of salvation dawns, he shall receive everlasting life. Then shall many be last instead of first, and first instead of last."

Here again Jesus looks forward into the glorious future. Then shall men change their parts, and the world's great ones shall be cast down from the seat of honor, while those whom the world despises now shall be exalted then by God. After what has been said already,¹ we shall not wonder that these words also have been misunderstood and tampered with. To begin with, the first Gospel makes an addition to Peter's question, and gives it thus: "But *we* have left every thing to follow thee. What shall we have therefore?" This addition changes the diffident disciple's timorous question into a bold and selfish demand for a reward, which would have succeeded strangely to the anxious exclamation of the disciples the moment before, and would certainly have drawn a very different answer from Jesus. It is true that Matthew finds a

¹ See pp. 331 ff.

warning against self-exaltation in the saying about “the first and the last,” and in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard called at different hours;¹ but this corrective comes too late, and is altogether too weak to balance the express promise of glory and blessedness just made to the Twelve. And indeed this very Gospel heightens the promise in a truly remarkable fashion; for, in contradiction to a saying which we shall consider presently,² it makes Jesus sanction the Jewish-Christian expectations and say: “I tell you that when all things are made new, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me shall likewise sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” This saying is also found in another connection in the third Gospel, in which we should hardly have expected it.³ Finally, Matthew misunderstands the sense in which Jesus spoke of compensation for every sacrifice that his disciples made. Jesus spoke of what he knew by experience;⁴ namely, that when we have left our old surroundings in pain and toil, the new surroundings into which we enter more than compensate us; that the fellowship of many kindred spirits makes ample amends for the ties of kindred we have had to break for the kingdom of God’s sake; in a word, that the joy which God gives to his faithful servants even now far outweighs the pain of every voluntary sacrifice. But the Evangelist failed to understand him, and omitted the words “now in this time,” thinking that this new kinship and these new possessions referred to the treasures of the kingdom of heaven. Mark, on his side, falls into circumlocutions and repetitions, and adds, from the experience of his own times, “with persecutions” for the Gospel’s sake.

Thus we see how determined the early Christians were to force the Master’s words into agreement with their own ideas and experience upon this point, if upon no other.

¹ See p. 296.

³ Luke xxii. 30.

² See pp. 351, 352.

⁴ Compare pp. 240, 241.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM.

(Continued.)

LUKE XII. 49-53, 57-59, XIII. 1-9, XI. 24-26, XIX. 1-10;
MATTHEW XX. 17-34.¹

EVEN if we had no direct indications or accounts of such a thing, we should suspect from what we know of the gloomy forebodings entertained by Jesus that he often had moments of deep depression in the course of this journey. Sometimes it was the probable result to himself of all his efforts that afflicted him ; sometimes the fearful judgment that his people were drawing upon themselves ; sometimes the great strain and ferment which he himself was causing. Did not his gospel hurl the torch of dissension among his contemporaries ? And what a sharp contrast was offered by this fact to the sweet hopes he himself had formerly cherished and the fair, bright anticipations still entertained by his followers. And was he not constantly compelled himself to insist on the rupture of the tenderest and holiest ties ? The kingdom of peace and love promised by the prophets would surely come, but who could say after how long and how terrible a struggle ? Listen how he poured out his heart to his friends !

“ I am come to bring fire into the world. What shall I do then ? Would that it were already kindled ! But I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and how am I troubled till it be over ! Do you think that I have come to give peace to the earth ? No, I tell you, but divisions and war ! For henceforth the five inmates of one house shall be divided, three against two, and two against three, — the father against his son, and the son against his father ; the mother against her daughter, and the daughter against her mother ; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. So shall the members of the same household become one another’s foes ! ”²

We shall presently hear Jesus speak of this baptism again. He means that he will be plunged into the depths of suffering ;

¹ Matthew x. 34-36, v. 25, 26, xii. 43-45; Mark x. 32-52; Luke xviii. 31-43.

² Compare Michah vii. 6.

that the waters of affliction will not only rise to his lips, but flow over his head. It is a striking metaphor, like that of the cup of suffering filled to the brim. But here let us consider some of the solemn warnings and denunciations which he addressed to the bystanders or the people at large. We could sometimes fancy that we were listening to John instead of Jesus.

He was greeted on a certain day with the mournful tidings that Pilate had laid hold of certain Galilæans who had come to offer their sacrifices at Jersalem, and had slain them in the forecourt of the temple. We know nothing as to the exact date of this event or the circumstances which occasioned the murder. Possibly there was some slight tumult to which the restless, excitable temperament of the countrymen of Jesus might easily give rise. The news doubtless made a very different impression upon different hearers. While one would clench his fist and turn his eyes to heaven, wondering whether the measure of Israel's oppression by these cursed heathen did not yet overflow, and whether the hour of redemption had not yet struck; others of a more cautious and submissive temperament would shake their heads, and declare that the victims had fallen before a righteous judgment of the Lord. But Jesus, while emphatically repudiating this Jewish doctrine of divine "judgments," warned his hearers no less earnestly against being excited to revenge by the murderous event, and urged them rather to regard it as a presage of the fate that hung over their own heads also. He took the same opportunity to remind them of an accident that had happened a short time before in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, opposite the south-west corner of the city wall,¹ from which false conclusions had likewise been drawn. "Do you think," he said severely, "that the death of these Galilæans shows that they were special sinners among their fellow-countrymen? I tell you no! but unless you repent you shall all perish likewise! Or do you think that the eighteen men who were crushed in the ruins when the tower of Siloam fell were specially guilty among all the citizens of Jerusalem, in God's sight? I tell you no! but unless you repent you will all perish likewise."

To enforce the necessity of a speedy repentance, Jesus used an illustration borrowed from the administration of earthly justice. It was best, he said, even at the very last moment, to come to some friendly agreement with a creditor. What he meant was that it was wise for a man to be reconciled

¹ See Map IV.

with God in time, before he was cast into the fire of Gehenna. These are his words : “ Why do you not consider what to do ? If you are going with your creditor to the court of law, do your best, even on the very road, to appease him. Otherwise he will take you before the judgment seat, and the judge will hand you over to the gaoler, and the gaoler will throw you into prison. I tell you, you will never come out again till you have paid the last farthing of your debt ! ”

Sometimes his warnings were addressed to all Israel ; and still in the form of parables : “ There was a certain fig-tree growing in a vineyard, and the master kept coming to see if there was any fruit on it, but could never find any. Then he said to the vine-dresser : ‘ See, I have come to look for fruit upon this fig-tree for three years, and have never found any. Cut it down, for it impoverishes the ground for nothing ! ’ But the man replied : ‘ Master, let it alone one year more, and I will try it once again. I will dig up the earth round its roots and manure it well ; and then if it bears fruit, all the better, and if not you can cut it down next year.’ ”

We can see that it is not so much God’s long-suffering as the certainty of the approaching judgment that Jesus seeks to enforce. One more attempt to teach his people their true calling, and then . . . ! But the conversion must be genuine, lasting, fruitful, not a mere fitful reformation followed by a far more hopeless relapse. Jesus had had experience of such reformations, and compared his incorrigible contemporaries to a man possessed by a devil, who had been relieved for a little while, but only to become a victim to his old disease in a yet more terrible degree. “ When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he wanders about in deserts seeking a resting-place and finding none. Then he says : ‘ I will go back to my old house, out of which I came.’ So he comes and finds it uninhabited, swept clean and beautified. Then he goes and finds seven other spirits, yet more wicked than himself, and takes them with him, and they go into the house and stay there. The last state of this man is worse than the first ; and even so shall this wicked race go on from bad to worse ! ”

We should certainly be wrong in supposing that Jesus never had brighter and more cheerful hours or days during this journey. On the contrary, we have already mentioned tokens of affection and reverence which he met with and rejoiced in on his way. But it is only natural that as he drew near to

the goal of his journey, the fearful thought of a fatal issue to all his efforts should again have risen in his mind with fresh distinctness. He had now crossed the river, left the valley of the Jordan behind him, and set his foot upon the territory of Judah, where the road led up a gentle ascent, through a densely populated district, and through natural scenery widely different from that which he had just left. And here, we are expressly told, Jesus took the Twelve aside again to speak to them of what was weighing on his mind. “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man,”—but in this case we must not attempt the task upon which we ventured in a previous instance,¹ of restoring the original form of his discourse, for the words of this third prediction of suffering have been adjusted to the event down to the minutest details by all the three Gospels. Jesus is made to foretell that he will be given up to the Sanhedrim, condemned to death by that assembly, and put into the hands of the heathen authorities to be mocked, scourged, and crucified. Mark and Luke do not even omit to say that he would be spit upon, while the latter puts into the mouth of Jesus the words, “All that was written by the prophets shall be accomplished upon the Son of Man.” In Mark, Jesus and his disciples completely change characters, for the latter hang back in dismay or follow timidly, while the Master goes on undisturbed and calm. We therefore leave all this as we find it, and can only be sure that on this occasion also Jesus concluded the discourse by an assurance that even if he were defeated for a time, yet “after three days” he would rise victorious.

His disciples understood the certainty of his final triumph better than the probability of his temporary defeat. Of course they were not so incapable of understanding his teaching, or sympathizing with his anxiety, or so absolutely blind to the true position of affairs, as not to apprehend the possibility of a hard and bitter struggle, involving them in the greatest difficulties and dangers, before the opposition should be overcome and the kingdom of God attained. But they were prepared, in such a case, to stand faithfully and bravely at their Master’s side as he faced the enemy, and to protect him from violence, sword in hand, against any odds. But as for the thought that their Master himself might have to purchase the victory by his own death, — that they could not by any possibility accept; that was still in conflict with all their ideas and all their faith; that was still an absurdity to

¹ See pp. 326 ff.

them. And so, when they saw that the crisis drew near, visions of grandeur and honor floated before their minds. Indeed two of them (the brothers James and John) thought that it was a good opportunity for securing their own future. They did not think it would be unfair or ungenerous towards the rest if they tried to gain the highest rank for themselves; for they, together with Simon, had been the first summoned and the most trusted of all the disciples. And if any thing was to be done it was high time now to do it. But since they could hardly venture upon putting their plan into execution themselves they persuaded their mother to help them, and she would do any thing if the interests of her children seemed to require it. So, once on a time, before they had reached Jericho, Zebedee's wife came with her two sons to Jesus, threw herself upon the ground before him, and begged a boon of him. "What is it?" he asked her gently. "Promise me," she cried humbly but fervently, "that these two sons of mine shall sit in your kingdom, the one on your right hand and the other on your left."

Here again we encounter the fixed belief of the disciples that, since their Master was going to the city of God, ere long, though the severest sufferings and the most stubborn conflict might intervene, he would ascend the throne of the Messiah. When this took place, James and John hoped to gain the highest places of honor after Jesus himself. What a painful shock this request must have been to Jesus! Was it in vain that he had warned his disciples so expressly yet again against self-exaltation and emulation? Would they remain to the end the victims of mere worldly ambition? What could he expect from such disciples? Would they be true to him and to the good cause when heavy sacrifices were required? He did not utter a word of reproof to the mother, for he could easily forgive even such a request as hers if dictated by a mother's love; but turning to the two disciples he said, with more than usual sternness, "You know not what you ask! Have you courage and strength to drink the cup which I must drain, and to submit to the baptism with which I must be baptized?" But they did not notice the tone of rebuke, and only heard the conditions. There was no need to doubt their readiness, however hard the proof might be. "We have," they answered, so eagerly that Jesus was encouraged by their zeal and felt that he was sure of them again. He answered more gently than before, "You shall empty the cup which I drink, and shall undergo the baptism with which I am baptized; but to

sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give. It is for them for whom God reserves it."

Did Jesus himself believe that one would rank above another in the kingdom of God? Was he so inconsistent with himself? Certainly not. He would have no outward, extraneous, arbitrary elevation of individuals, no distinctions such as the world recognizes; but he knew very well that God has divided the gifts of the spirit diversely, and that one has increased his talents more and another less. Not only did he say, "The more humble, the more exalted; the more self-denying, the more to be honored!" but he also saw that the Father had given one clearer light and more savory salt of the spirit than another. Perhaps at this very time the possibility rose before his mind, which was afterwards realized by Stephen and Paul, that he might yet find disciples less prejudiced and intractable than the Twelve, or even the chosen three,—disciples who would penetrate further into his meaning, would exert a more powerful influence than they, and would become the first after himself in the kingdom of God!

However this may be, he was soon compelled to intercede among the disciples themselves; for when the other ten heard how James and John had tried to steal a march upon them, they were exceedingly angry, for they were all of them equally worldly and ambitious. But Jesus, in order to restore a good understanding, called them all to him, and without at all excusing the conduct of the two brothers, gently reproved the rest: "You know how things go among the heathen,—how princes govern the peoples and great men control the masses? But it must not be so with you! If any one of you would be great, let him serve the rest; and whichever of you would be first, let him be the servant of all.¹ Even so the Son of Man has come not to be served, but to serve all others [and to give his life as a ransom for many]."

That was and is and will ever be the motto of the kingdom of God. How many of its professed servants understand and apply it as Jesus did himself, and required others to do?

The caravan passed by the stately groves to which Jericho owes its name of the "City of Palms;" by the precious balsam-bushes that, according to the ancient authorities, grew nowhere else but here; by the rose and flower-gardens, which

¹ Compare Luke xxii. 25-27.

filled the air with their perfume, and which strangers vied with the people of the place in praising. At last they came to the beautiful, flourishing, active city of Jericho itself, where they intended to stay and find quarters for the night, to recover from the fatigues of the journey and prepare themselves for the last and hardest part of their pilgrimage, — the barren reach from Jericho to Jerusalem. Their fame had preceded them to Jericho, and a great crowd came out to meet the celebrated Rabbi or Prophet of Nazareth, who had succeeded John in preaching the approach of the kingdom of God. Curiosity and friendly interest on the one hand, and hatred of the seducer of the people on the other, as well as the deeper longing for the salvation of the Lord, brought out the citizens of Jericho in crowds ; and as the company entered the city and passed slowly through it, the varying sentiments of the bystanders were from time to time distinctly enough proclaimed.

Now among the crowd a man, whose wealth was shown by his rich apparel, might have been observed pressing forward to get a sight of Jesus as he drew near the far end of the town where this man lived. He was the chief of the great tax-office at Jericho, which was a very important one, and his name was Zacchæus. We can well believe, therefore, that not a creature stirred a step to make way for him ! This grieved him beyond measure, for he was a short man and could not see over the shoulders and heads of the crowd ; but he was determined not to be thwarted, so he extricated himself from the crush and ran forward till he came to a place where a sycamore-tree grew beside the way. The caravan would pass by it ; so, regardless of his own dignity and the jeering of the lookers-on, he clambered up among the spreading branches of this tree, whence he could narrowly watch the man of whom he had heard so much that was good, and could observe him at his ease. Little did he think what was in store for him !

The crowd soon reached the spot, and many eyes were involuntarily raised to the sycamore-tree. Jesus himself looked up, stood still, and cried to the publican, “Zacchæus, come down quickly ! for I would gladly be your guest to-day.” Zacchæus could hardly believe his ears. In a moment he was on the ground again, and, after doing obeisance to his guest, he conducted him to his house, while his heart overflowed with joy. But we can easily see what a bad impression this would make on the public. “Just look ! He actually prefers to be the

guest of such a sinner rather than of any of the respectable and virtuous people who would have been glad to entertain him!" Such comments were freely uttered; so freely, indeed, that as Zacchæus and Jesus were about to enter the house they could not help hearing them. The former perhaps feared that the unexpected honor, the great privilege, of receiving the prophet might even yet be snatched away from him, and that Jesus might choose another host; but at any rate he felt that he ought to show not only his gratitude, but also his perfect readiness to make full amends for his past life; so he took a brave resolve, and, standing before Jesus with a certain solemnity of manner, he uttered this spontaneous vow before the prophet crossed his threshold: "The half of my possessions, Lord, I hereby give to the poor; and if I have exacted any undue payments, I will restore them fourfold."¹ Jesus was pleased by the man's passionate longing for salvation, and at once to set him at peace, to restore him to honor before the people, and to defend his own conduct, said: "Today is salvation come into this house, since he too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Probably the stay at Jericho was not a long one, but neither was it without results. The Pharisees may have been prevented from visiting Jesus by his staying in a sinner's house; but others would no doubt be only too glad of any opportunity of seeing and hearing him. And whoever came he doubtless taught them that the kingdom of God was at hand, and urged them with all his power to repent. Nor can we help imagining that his disciples scattered up and down among the people of Jericho must, in spite of themselves, have given utterance to their great expectations and set many a heart a-glow. We must also remember that the scene of John's appearance and activity was not far from Jericho, so that the impression he had made would be more lasting here than elsewhere, and the sound of his voice must still have been echoing in many a bosom. We can therefore well believe the statement that when the caravan left Jericho a great number of the citizens went with it. Most of these would only escort Jesus a little way, but some would attach themselves to him more permanently. In connection with this circumstance the following story of a miraculous cure is given:—

Just outside the city a certain blind man, Bartimæus, sat

¹ Compare Exodus xxii. 1, 4, 7; Numbers v. 6, 7; and p. 135.

by the road-side begging. Hearing the approach of a number of people in no small commotion he asked what it was all about, and was told that Jesus of Nazareth was coming past. Then a ray of hope shot through his night of misery, and he cried at the top of his voice, "Jesus, son of David, take pity on me!" In vain did the foremost of the crowd command him to be silent and rebuke him for disturbing the Master. He only cried all the more earnestly, "Son of David, have pity!" Jesus heard him, stood still, and said to the people round about him, "Let him come to me!" Then they said to the blind man, "Be of good cheer! he is calling you." In a moment Bartimæus had thrown off his cloak and stood up to be led to Jesus. "What would you have from me?" said the Master kindly. "Rabboni! [my Master] I would receive my sight again," answered the other in a suppliant voice. With deep compassion Jesus laid his hand upon his eyes and said, "Receive your sight! your faith has saved you." On the spot the blind man gained his sight again, and he followed his benefactor, rendering fervent thanks to God.

Mark (and he alone) gives the blind man's name as Bartimæus, having already said that he was "the son of Timaeus," which is the same thing; but we must not be misled by the fact of the name being given (a circumstance to which there is no parallel in other stories of healing) into supposing that any actual individual was meant; for in all probability this name is symbolical, and means "son of the blind." It is of small importance that Matthew speaks of *two* blind men on this as on a previous occasion,¹ or that Luke makes the event occur as Jesus enters Jericho instead of as he leaves it. He does so in order to provide a more suitable introduction to the meeting with Zacchæus which he alone relates. It is possible that this symbolic narrative designedly places us at the point when Jesus turns directly towards Jerusalem, as an indication that he was ready to open the eyes of his people, — the blind sons of blind fathers.² But originally it was most likely a picture of Jesus as the sinners' friend. We need not stay to ask whether any special event which really took place at Jericho lies at the bottom of the story, nor whether the cure of the blind man (or men) in the first two Gospels corresponds properly to the rescue of Zacchæus in the third, while Luke has preserved both the historical and the symbolical form of the event side by side.³ Again, cer-

¹ See p. 208. ² Compare Matthew xv. 14, xxiii. 16, 17, 19, 24, 26; John ix.

³ See p. 202.

tain difficulties have been urged against the visit to the chief publican itself; for instance, that Luke alone records it, that Jesus could not have known the man's name, and that Zacchæus has the symbolical meaning of "clean."¹ But these objections do not appear to us conclusive; and in any case we need not discuss them, for both the story of Zacchæus and that of the blind man give a true picture, each in its way, of the character of the work of Jesus. But the point that strikes us most, and upon which we would lay the fullest stress, is the position which these stories occupy. Who does not feel the significance of the fact that here, in Judæa itself, at the very gates as it were of the City of the Temple, here as he enters upon the last stage of his career, — a stage in many respects so dark and gloomy, — Jesus meets us yet again as the redeemer of the lost ones, loving and gentle, spontaneous and delicate in his advances, pitiful, self-denying, and lovable as ever!

Under every change that we have observed, even under this last great revolution in his prospects, his feelings, and the tone of his preaching, he remains the same in his divine pity for every one who has gone astray. His heart was as warm as ever; his faith in human nature and his reverence for man were not shaken for a moment by his melancholy experience. The preacher of God's judgment drawing near to the capital of his country is still, even there, even to the end, the friend of sinners, the inspired advocate of the new and immortal principle of man's worth and God's love. It was in this spirit of redeeming love, it was to seek and to save, that he plunged into the midst of dangers that none foresaw more clearly than himself.

¹ Compare Luke xi. 41 with xix. 8.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JESUS APPEARS AT JERUSALEM.

MATTHEW XXI. 1-16.¹

HARDLY had the traveller to the City of the Temple left Jericho a league behind, when he found he had passed from one of the loveliest spots upon earth into an ill-favored and dismal waste. The whole distance was six leagues, and in spite of undulations the journey was on the whole an ascent, for Jerusalem was three thousand feet above the Jordan valley. It was these barren rocks, these narrow passes, these rock-bound defiles, thinly covered with brushwood, that formed the background upon which the picture of the "Good Samaritan," already known to us, was painted. But as bands of pilgrims passed along the road, drawing nearer with every step to the goal of their journey, for which they had longed with such eager expectation, we may be sure that they seldom or never allowed themselves to be appalled, or even depressed, by the scenery through which they passed ; and least of all would it disturb the high-wrought enthusiasm and joyous expectations of the caravan we are now accompanying in fancy. How many a heart leaped up in transport ; how many a bosom panted with impatience ; how many a straining eye saw nothing of precipitous cliffs or barren gorges, but was filled by the dazzling vision of a splendid coronation and the glorious dominion it would inaugurate ! Can we not picture the companions of Jesus on this last day of the journey ? — some of them quiet, as if plunged in thought ; some of them engaged in animated conversation ; yet others with joyous cries from sacred songs upon their lips ; but almost all in growing tension of excitement.

And Jesus himself ? It is extremely difficult to pierce the veil of his thoughts. One thing, however, is certain : that Luke is mistaken in making him bewail the impenitence of the city, and foretell its future destruction by the Romans in minute detail² as soon as he approaches and beholds it ; for the city's impenitence had not as yet appeared, and Luke is

¹ Mark xi. 1-11, 15-18; Luke xix. 28-40, 45-48.

² Luke xix. 41-44.

evidently confounding the feelings which inspired Jesus a week or two later, after the failure of his efforts, with those of his first approach to the city. We shall be nearer the truth in thinking of Jesus as suspended between hope and fear, alternately contemplating the possibility of success and failure during these last hours; but the fact that he did nothing to check the enthusiasm of his followers, and presently entered upon the contest in such a lofty mood himself, appears to indicate that for the time hope, if not supreme, was at least predominant in his mind,—which is indeed no more than we should expect. Here again Luke has confounded the expectation with the result; for he has put into the mouth of Jesus, a few hours before, a parable expressly designed to correct the impression that, since he had now almost reached Jerusalem, the kingdom of God would immediately come.¹ In spite of its inappropriateness, however, we will give this parable here. It is that of the minæ, or pounds. A mina represents about 3£ 6s.; and to understand the story we must further note that in those times there was nothing strange in the idea of a man's going to Rome to receive at the Emperor's hands the appointment to the vacant throne of some tributary state. Thirty years before Archelaus had done this very thing, and had been appointed ruler of Judæa and the two neighboring districts in spite of the opposition of the Jews, who had sent ambassadors to implore Augustus to spare them the imposition of a Herod. There is an obvious reference to all this in the parable, which runs as follows:²

A certain man of noble birth set out for a distant land, to be invested with the regal dignity and then return. But first he summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them each a mina to trade with during his absence. It was only a trifle; but his object was simply to make a trial of their fidelity, zeal, and ability, since he would soon be wanting faithful servants as governors. Now, when he had set out, his fellow-citizens sent an embassy after him to inform his suzerain that they did not want him as their prince, for they hated him; but their protest was in vain. So when the nobleman returned as king, he summoned the ten slaves to see what they had accomplished. The first had increased his stock by ten minæ, the second by five, and so on; for which they were all rewarded by the warm approval of their master, and by appointments to governorships of ten, five, or such other number of cities as corresponded with their deserts. Then he

¹ Luke xix. 11.

² Luke xix. 12-37.

ordered the enemies who had tried to prevent his becoming king to be brought into his presence and cut down before his eyes.¹

The meaning evidently is that Jesus was not going to ascend the Messianic throne in Jerusalem at once, but must first go up to heaven, there to receive the kingship from God, — for such was the faith of the apostolic age,² — and that on his return he would reward his faithful servants and inflict a fearful punishment upon the rebellious Jews. The story was certainly never told by Jesus. It is an imitation (and not a very successful one) of the parable of the talents;³ and this accounts for the introduction of an episode which so disturbs the progress of the narrative that we designcdly omitted it. It is this : One of the slaves came with his mina and said that he had wrapped it in a cloth and hidden it, because he knew his master was a hard and unjust man. His master therefore punished him, and rebuked him for not having put his money in the bank ; after which he astonished all present by ordering the mina to be given to the most enterprising of the other servants, who had gained ten extra minæ already. Now all this was well enough in the parable of the talents, for there the master gave his servants charge of all his possessions, and even the least favored of them had to manage a considerable sum ; but here the smallness of the amount in question makes the whole proceeding inappropriate, and it would simply be ridiculous to show additional respect for the governor of ten cities by a present of three guineas !

But let us return to Jesus and his fellow-travellers. We have already said that the Master made no attempt to check the enthusiasm of his friends ; and when they had exchanged the wilderness of Jericho for a less-forbidding district ; when their eyes rested on the Mount of Olives, behind which they knew the Holy City lay ; when they had passed through Bethany, on the eastern slope, half hidden among its noble trees and undulating verdure, — their excitement rose at last to its culminating point. Jesus had sent for an ass, on which to ride into the city ; and, in lieu of a saddle, some of his disciples had folded their cloaks and laid them on the ass's back for him to sit on. Then they ascended the ridge between the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Offence ; and there the City of God, so loved, so praised in the songs of Israel, lay stretched before them in all its glory ! What colossal walls

¹ See pp. 304, 305.

² See pp. 165, 166.

² Compare Acts ii. 36, iii. 20, 21, *et seq.*

and mighty towers rising from the precipitous rock ! What luxurious palaces and entrancing pleasure-grounds ! But above and before all else the eye was dazzled and the heart enthralled by the Temple of the Lord : an imposing and marvellous erection even to the heathen, but to the Israelite the very consummation of holiness and glory upon earth,— his greatest pride and his deepest joy. There was the temple area, with its noble colonnades ; and on the highest terrace there stood the sanctuary itself, with its glittering parapets of snow-white marble, tipped with the tapering golden spikes and plated on all sides with sheets of gold, shining beneath the sunbeams, now like a mountain of snow, now like a sea of fire. How could such a sight fail to call forth a general outburst of enthusiasm ? The sacred spot was reached where the kingdom of God would be established, and on the very instant honor and glory must be rendered to him who brought that kingdom ! Most of the company threw off their upper garments and laid them in the way for the ass to step upon, while others strewed the path with leaves and branches from the neighboring fields ; and, as they waved the palm-branches in their hands, those who went before and those who followed him sang in alternation the song of praise, —

Hosanna !
Bless him that comes in the name of the Lord !
Bless the approaching kingdom of David our father !
Hosanna in the highest !

With such shouts of triumph they turned northwards along the slopes of the Mount of Olives, past Bethphage that was reckoned part of the sacred ground of the City of the Temple, by the Garden of Gethsemane, then down across the bridge over the Kidron, and up the hill again, through the Sheep-gate into Jerusalem ! It was no new thing at Jerusalem to see caravans of pilgrims drawing near with exuberant signs of delight ; but such an entry as this must have caused no little commotion. “ Who is it ? ” the people asked in curiosity and amazement as the procession, chiefly composed of Galilæans, passed them by, and the central figure drew all eyes upon him. And the crowd of triumphant Galilæans answered, “ It is the mighty prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee ! ”

Before accompanying Jesus and his disciples through the streets of the city to the temple, we must make a few remarks in justification of the account we have given of their entry ;

for it departs in several particulars from the narratives of the Gospels, which do not always agree with each other.

According to Luke the disciples of Jesus cry, “Blessed be the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace be in heaven, and glory in the highest!”¹ upon which certain Pharisees who are present request the Master to forbid them; but he replies, “I tell you that if they held their peace the very stones would cry out!” One does not quite see what had brought the Pharisees thus early into the presence of Jesus, and his short and stern reply strikes us as an implied rebuke, and a kind of echo of the wail over Jerusalem’s impenitence already mentioned. At any rate, this question and answer can hardly have been uttered upon this occasion.

A second point is of more importance. All the Gospels make Jesus, upon reaching the Mount of Olives, despatch two of his friends to the village that lies before them (presumably Bethphage) to fetch him an ass’s colt which, he says, they will find at the entrance of the village, tied up. If any one asks them what they are doing, they are to answer, “The lord requires it,” and they will be no further molested. Now, this story implies either a previous arrangement with the owner of the colt, or divine foreknowledge on the part of Jesus; and when we consider all the circumstances, and remember that Jesus was a stranger in the village, the former supposition becomes almost as unsatisfactory as the latter. Moreover, Mark and Luke not only add that the bystanders or the owners of the colt did actually challenge the arbitrary proceedings of the disciples, but also say that, according to Jesus himself, no one had ever ridden on the beast before. The idea is, of course, that it would not otherwise have been holy enough for him;² but any one can see how ill-suited an unbroken colt would be for carrying Jesus in the midst of so excited a procession.

But Matthew’s account is the most extraordinary of all; for he makes Jesus send for *two* beasts, an ass and a colt, and ride upon them both! This is because he sees in the event the literal fulfilment of a prophecy in Zechariah,³ in which, by a curious blunder, he supposes that two animals are mentioned. He renders it: “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold! thy king is coming to thee, gentle, riding

¹ Compare Luke ii. 14.

² Compare Numbers xix. 2; Deuteronomy xxi. 3; 1 Samuel vi. 7; and Luke xxiii. 53; John xix. 41.

³ Zechariah ix. 9. See vol. ii. p. 255; compare Isaiah lxii. 11.

upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.” We may note in passing that one of the earliest ecclesiastical Fathers, running off upon the sound, actually quotes a verse from Jacob’s blessing to prove that the ass was bound to a vine-tree;¹ and after all this is only carrying out the practice, habitual to the Jewish-Christian Evangelist himself, of using the Scriptures of the Old Testament as materials for the life of Jesus.² We need therefore pay no further attention to the details given in Matthew; but, on the other hand, the coincidence between this prophecy of the Messiah as the Prince of Peace and the mode in which Jesus entered the city is sufficiently remarkable to suggest the question whether he himself had the words of Zechariah in his mind. Did he enter the city upon an ass expressly to show that, though he claimed to be the Messiah, it was not as an earthly potentate who would more fitly ride a war-horse, but rather as a peace-bearer? This is not impossible, but neither does it seem very probable; for riding on an ass was so very common a mode of travelling that Jesus can hardly have calculated on those who saw him thinking of the prophecy in question and divining his meaning. Nor is it even certain that his disciples expressly greeted him as the Messiah in person upon this occasion; for though Matthew makes them cry, “Hosanna to the son of David!” it is doubtful whether Jesus was ever really addressed by this title during his lifetime;³ and the Evangelist himself appears to contradict his own account immediately afterwards, when he makes the exultant disciples answer the question of the people of Jerusalem by saying—not “This is the Messiah!” but—“This is the prophet from Nazareth!”

In a word, the whole thing seems to have happened quite simply. The ass—a much finer and more swift-footed animal and far more highly esteemed in the East than with ourselves—was the animal ordinarily ridden in Palestine, as the horse is here; and, though we cannot tell how Jesus came to have the opportunity or the wish to ride into Jerusalem, there is nothing in the least extraordinary in either the one or the other. Perhaps he thought this mode of entry more suitable to the dignity of the occasion than walking. In the same spirit he refrained from checking his disciples’ cries of triumph. Nothing could be more natural than for the latter to sing a few lines of the hundred and eighteenth psalm in his honor, for it was often sung at the Feast of Tabernacles and

¹ Genesis xlix. 11.

² See p. 37.

³ See p. 38.

other festivals. “Hosanna,” in verse 25 (properly *hoschianna*, i.e. “Help, then!” or “Save us!”), was a form of invoking a blessing or expressing joy, and the following verse was originally a greeting offered by the priests to the visitors of the temple. But, after all, even if Jesus was not expressly called the Messiah, it was nevertheless a Messianic entry into Jerusalem; for at any rate he was conducted into the City of the Temple, amidst the acclamations of his followers, as the prophet who would bring the Messianic kingdom. The Twelve, of course, would look upon him in that case as the Anointed of the Lord himself, whereas the rest may have formed the same conception in some cases and divergent ones in others.¹ It is not without reason, therefore, that the Christian Church attaches great importance to this event, and consecrates the Sunday before Easter to its memory. The day is fixed in accordance with the indications of the fourth Gospel, and is called Palm Sunday after the commemorative palm branches with which the churches are decorated. Finally, when Matthew says that “the whole city was moved,” we must look upon his words as a natural exaggeration, and need not be surprised to find that this triumphal entry does not seem to have been so much as mentioned at the trial of Jesus; for, though it made a deep impression upon his followers at the time, the great majority of the people of Jerusalem would not pay the least attention to it.

So Jesus, of Nazareth in Galilee, had entered Jerusalem at the head of his followers, and they had greeted him as the prophet who came to inaugurate the kingdom of God. They themselves, of course, made straight for the temple; but the question was whether their enthusiasm would infect the people of God’s city, and force them to join their procession and take up their cries of joy, while Jesus advanced towards Israel’s sanctuary and finally entered its gates? It can hardly surprise us that nothing of the kind took place. The people of Jerusalem looked on in surprise, or ran together here and there, in half-contemptuous curiosity to witness these demonstrations of Galilæan excitement, but that was all. No doubt this was a great disappointment to the friends of Jesus, if not to himself; but the future might make up for the present, they thought.

To the temple, then! They had only a few streets to pass through before reaching one of the gates that opened into the

¹ Compare pp. 312, 313, and Acts iii. 22 ff.

consecrated area. Here Jesus dismounted. What were his thoughts as he stood there? His foot was now to rest upon the spot which, as his contemporaries thought, had been for thousands of years the sole earthly abode of the Eternal, the Lord of heaven! It was not, indeed, for the first time. He had doubtless visited the temple more than once in early life. The impression he received on the first occasion must have been overwhelming. National reminiscences and the force of tradition added impressiveness to the grand proportions and the magnificent architecture and adornments of the temple; and when the devout young Galilean entered the court of the heathen, and cast his eye over the extended area, surrounded by double and triple rows of columns, each four-and-thirty feet in height, each hewed from a single block of the whitest marble, and wainscoted with cedar; when he gazed on the tessellated pavement that covered the whole open space, and on the terrace in the centre, that none but the sons of the chosen people might ascend; when he looked yet further and beheld the second terrace, upon which stood the court of the priests and the sanctuary itself; when he saw what inestimable treasures had been lavished upon every thing, how exquisitely each detail had been executed, and with what marvellous art the whole had been blended together,—must not his senses have almost reeled? But his subsequent visits would produce an ever-growing sense of want and dissatisfaction, in proportion as his own religious life developed; and his aversion to the formality which reigned uncontrolled in the temple must have constantly risen. It was perhaps a long time now since he had been there; and, as he raised his foot once more over the consecrated threshold, he felt afresh that, in opening the treasure-house of his spirit to the people and bringing them true salvation, he must in appearance act the part of a destroyer, and in the name of Moses and the prophets pronounce the sentence of condemnation upon this dead religion. He could not look upon the temple with the indifferent eye of a stranger. He, if any one, felt the inseparable tie of a common faith with the pious generations who had worshipped there. His heart overflowed with mingled and conflicting emotions. In this primeval seat of Israel's worship he must appear as the messenger of the Lord,—must demand an absolute renovation; must announce the approaching judgment; must preach the gospel of the kingdom.

In sacred transport he entered the temple, with gait erect and beaming eye, followed by his disciples!

What a scene it was that met him ! Not only the press of coming and going pilgrims,—here approaching with their beasts for sacrifice, here pushing their way one against another, and here raising their songs of praise, all which he could have borne,—but the clatter and chaffer of a fair ! The jostling and shouting of the market-place had drowned the voice of devotion ! For here in the outer court stood the booths of the cattle-dealers, of the traders in wine, oil, corn, incense, salt, and other requisites for sacrifice, and of the money-brokers who changed the coins of the various districts from which the faithful had streamed to the temple, for the didrachma of the temple duty or for Greek and Roman coins. It was vain to expect any feeling for the sanctity of the place in these men. They simply came there to make what they could, and too often deliberately reckoned upon cheating the pilgrims by demanding extortionate prices for their wares, or taking advantage of their ignorance of the exchange value of the coinage. And, even when there was no cheating, the clatter of voices, clinking of money, bleating and lowing of beasts filled the court ! Maybe the dealers and money-changers looked for more business yet from the arrival of another caravan of pilgrims, with the sacred chant upon their lips.

Now Jesus knew what always went on here. He had been distressed by this temple-market before. But when we remember the mood in which he now entered the temple, we can well believe that the scene made him boil with indignation as it had never done before. The impulse to put an end to it rose strong within him. Had not God set him his task that moment ? He did not check the impulse, but gave it rein. Irresistible in his sacred wrath, he drove the hucksters and dealers through the gate, overturned the tables of the money-changers, while their coins rolled along the ground, and threw down the seats of the dove-sellers.

Never yet, we may be sure, had his followers seen him with that flashing eye, that arm extended in command, as one of the prophets of old ! And to make the resemblance more striking yet, to prove that he was consciously treading in the footsteps of the prophets and was urged by their spirit, he seconded his deeds by words taken from two well-known prophetic sayings of the ancient times :¹ “It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves !”

This last expression obviously refers to the dishonest prac-

¹ Isaiah lvi. 7 ; Jeremiah vii. 11

tices to which the love of gain gave rise. But it may well be asked how Jesus could possibly cleanse the temple in this way single-handed. Why did all these people tamely submit to being expelled? How came it that the temple-guard, who had to keep order within the sacred precincts, did not intervene, and put the disturber of the peace under restraint, or at least expel him? Now, it is perfectly true that a fortnight later, in the week before the Passover, such a proceeding would have been simply and utterly impossible; for at that season there was an indescribable crush of visitors, and we may gain some idea of the amount of trade that was carried on from the fact that the lambs alone were counted by the thousand; but when Jesus expelled the traders, they may not have been so numerous as one might at first suppose. Then we must remember that the hallowed zeal which carried him away so suddenly extorted such submission, at any rate for the moment, that resistance was impossible; and besides, his commanding personality borrowed at least the appearance of material support from his numerous followers; for, though they took no direct part in the work, their presence rendered any attempt at violent resistance inadvisable.

As for the action itself, its purport was not confined to the removal of offensive and inharmonious surroundings from the temple, and the maintenance of its sanctity,—for it had a wider and symbolical significance, and in this respect again resembled the actions of the ancient prophets. It was, in the fullest sense, an open declaration of war upon the formal worship of the times. The priests, who had a very substantial interest in the temple-market, took an actual pride in the press of business in the court; for the number of tradesmen and the amount of their wares indicated the number of purchasers, and that, in its turn, was the gauge of Jewish piety, fidelity, and zeal. This last consideration influenced the Pharisees also to the same effect. This was but natural, for such abuses were the necessary result of looking for religion in a host of ceremonies and externalities; and in later ages the same addiction to formalities produced analogous excesses in the Roman and Greek churches, without shocking the faithful in the least. This cleansing of the temple involved by necessary implication the condemnation of the whole system of sacrifice, which really required a market to support it; nor was Jesus the first of the men of God to condemn the sacrificial system. It was not against Moses and the prophets that Jesus now advanced as a religious reformer,

for he felt that he was vindicating their work and spirit, but it was against the conceptions of piety current in his own age and among his own people. By this act he defined his position as clearly and sharply as possible, and his aggressive attitude was a striking exposition of his views and intentions. His action was a visible presentation of the words which it appears from the evidence given at his trial he must have uttered in Jerusalem : “ I will destroy this temple, and in three days will raise it again.” By “ this temple ” he meant the Jewish religion, which he came to destroy in order that he might raise it again renovated and purified. In future when he spoke of the kingdom of God every one knew what he meant. This one vigorous measure had put both the masses and their leaders in a position to choose decisively for or against him.

As for the leaders, whether priests or Scribes, their choice never wavered for an instant. Jesus had summoned them to arms, and made them his avowed enemies both by his entry and by his cleansing of the temple. Mark and Luke, however, are a little premature in making the Sanhedrim immediately form the definite project of taking his life, and only delay its execution for fear of the masses. The first Gospel mentions on this occasion that Jesus healed some blind men and cripples who came to him in the temple, which is perhaps a reminiscence of an old saying that forbade the blind and crippled to enter the sacred place ;¹ and the same Gospel says that the children in the court cried out, “ Hosanna to the son of David ! ” upon which the chief priests and Scribes angrily demanded of Jesus whether he heard what they said, and found little satisfaction in his brief reply : “ I hear it ! But have you never read, ‘ From the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou prepared thy praise ? ’ ”² These details do not commend themselves to our acceptance, and come in strangely after the violent scene that precedes them. Mark, in his turn, relates that Jesus would allow no one to carry household utensils or furniture, for instance, through the temple court, when that was the shortest way from one part of the city to another ; and also that he called the temple a house of prayer “ for all nations,” which is the expression really used in Isaiah ; but Jesus was not thinking of the heathen at that moment. It is of more importance to note that the same Evangelist represents the Master as simply visiting the temple and looking round on his first arrival and then retiring, since it was rather late, but only to return the

¹ Compare vol. ii. p. 4, and 2 Samuel v. 8.

² Psalm viii. 2.

next day and assert himself by the cleansing of the temple. We see at once how improbable this is. The next morning he was without his numerous escort, and, what is more, he was in a less sensitive and excited mood. His burst of indignation at seeing once more what he had carefully inspected the evening before would be very artificial, and his whole line of conduct unnatural, not to say impossible.

Let us now look back for a moment, and sum up in a single word our conception of the precise project with which Jesus had entered Jerusalem.

Here again we are driven to conjectures, for the Gospels make it appear as if he had come with the simple object of being put to death. But even suppose he expected the issue to be fatal, he must surely have contemplated the possibility of success, and must at any rate have had some definite project, whether destined to succeed or fail. It is not until we clearly understand what this project actually was that we can see the full bearings of his entry into the city, of his assertion of his power in the temple court, and, generally, of his appearance at Jerusalem.

We know that he had come to offer his people the kingdom of heaven, the perfect blessedness of close communion with the heavenly Father. If Israel accepted it, then Jesus would already have removed from the shoulders of his countrymen the yoke which Pharisaic scripturalism had laid upon them ; they would have broken in principle with their national pride and hatred, their formality and self-righteousness, — and God would do the rest.

In the present circumstances, therefore, there was but one thing that could make the efforts of Jesus successful, but one thing that could rescue him personally, and also do what was far more important in his eyes, — preserve the kingdom of God for Israel, and Israel for the kingdom of God. That one thing was a rapid and increasing accession of disciples, a series of decisive proofs of sympathy and powerful expressions of faith on the part of the masses. This would entirely disarm the opposition of the Pharisaic and the priestly parties. The temple and the synagogues would then, so to speak, be gradually emptied ; the approaching Passover would become the feast of the great redemption ; Jerusalem would thenceforth be the central point of the work of Jesus, and the thousands and tens of thousands of foreign Jews the messengers of his kingdom. That would be his success !

He had therefore, properly speaking, no choice in the matter. It was impossible for him to begin quietly and tentatively, as he had done in Galilee. He must at once and conspicuously challenge attention, and make it impossible to ignore his arrival and its significance. Averse as he was to any sensational display, he could not now desire to enter the city and the temple in quiet simplicity; and the Messianic demonstrations which accompanied his entry, though he had by no means provoked them, were not unacceptable to him. He knew well enough that a host of shallow misconceptions lurked beneath these exuberant cries and tokens of veneration, but yet he accepted them as well intentioned and as coming from the heart. They were the first public recognition of the significance of his person and his work; and may not the hope have now revived in his heart that they might perchance be the first fruits of his harvest of souls, a prophecy that God would turn the people's hearts to him? At the very worst, these loud expressions of devotion could not fail to further his purpose of announcing that he had come, and had come in the character of God's messenger, commissioned to establish the kingdom of heaven. It was but another step — and a step of which any accident might be the occasion — for him to proceed to some such striking and decisive action as that in the temple court. And this deed, occasioned by the repulsive scene that met him, and as little foreseen or premeditated on his part as the mode of his entry into the city, was an unmistakable indication to the public of the nature of the Messianic kingdom he came to found.

But it need hardly be said that in spite of all this the work he contemplated at Jerusalem was of a purely religious and by no means of a political character, and that he had not the least intention of exciting a popular commotion. We must not dream of his departing by a hair's breadth from his principles, or becoming untrue to himself! It was, therefore, impossible for him to repeat or follow up this single deed. His only weapons were the power of the word, of the spirit, of the truth, — the appeal to the heart and conscience. Nor could he go a single step further in the employment of material means. But, since this was so, his impressive deed had not improved his chances of success; for the masses could not fail to be disappointed when the sequel answered so ill to the introduction, when the work was so unlike the manifesto. And how could this disappointment have any but disastrous consequences?

CHAPTER XXX.

JESUS ON THE DEFENSIVE.

MATTHEW XXI. 17, 23-32, XXII. 15-40; JOHN VII. 53-VIII 11.¹

THROUGHOUT his stay in Jerusalem Jesus never spent the night in the city itself. Every evening he went with the Twelve to Bethany, returning early in the morning to teach in the temple-synagogue, or one of the other halls in the colonnades of the Forecourt. We have already followed him along the road from Bethany through Bethphage. The distance was about three-quarters of a league; but a footpath, which ran across the Mount of Olives, shortened it by a few minutes' walk.

Whatever it may have been at first, it ultimately became a pressing measure of precaution to retire at night to some refuge unknown to the authorities; for, though they were afraid of a disturbance if they attempted to seize him by day, they might safely have snatched him from his bed at night. But we cannot tell whether such precautions were necessary from the first, or whether Jesus spent his nights outside Jerusalem, in order to secure the opportunity of recovering his own composure, and enjoying a time of quiet intercourse with his friends in the evening and morning.

The hospitable customs of the East make it probable that he remained under one roof during his whole visit, and would only have quitted it in obedience to some special necessity. Accordingly, we may think of a certain Simon, known as "the leper," as his permanent host. The third Gospel is less accurate in representing him as spending his nights on the Mount of Olives, and apparently in the open air in the garden of Gethsemane.²

The very first evening Jesus went with the Twelve, after dismissing the multitude we may suppose, to enjoy the quiet of the village where the night's lodging was prepared. It is not improbable that he knew Simon already. Perhaps he had met him as he passed through Bethany at noon, perhaps

¹ Mark xi. 19, 27-33, xii. 13-34 a; Luke xix. 47, 48, xx. 1-8, 20-39, xxi 37, 38.

² Luke xxi. 37, xxii. 39, 40. Compare John viii. 1.

later on in the day, and no long acquaintance would be needed to justify the offer of hospitality. Jesus had most likely spoken little after purifying the temple, for the day was far advanced when he entered Jerusalem, and the wearying journey, followed by such a tumult of emotions, must have so strained his powers as to make the opportunity of resting under a friendly roof extremely grateful.

Here, then, he might gather strength for the struggle which he saw so clearly awaiting him. The following morning found him in the temple-court again at the spot whence he had dismissed his followers the night before, addressing both them and a number of others whom interest or curiosity had led to accompany them. Doubtless he assumed the authority of a prophet; and his preaching, in accordance with the action of the previous day that introduced it, would be an emphatic exposition of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God and of the moral demands it made upon its subjects. But see, he is interrupted! A deputation of respected citizens approaches him with solemn dignity. Every one makes room for them, for they are members of the Sanhedrim. This Sanhedrim was composed¹ of "high priests" ("chief priests" in our Authorized Version), elders, or heads of distinguished Jewish families and the most eminent Scribes. Under the name of "high priests" were included not only the priest who held the office in question at the moment, but all who had ever filled it in their lives, and even the most influential of the remaining members of the high priestly families. The members of this little deputation therefore, though it may not have had an official character, felt bound in their individual capacity to put some check upon the pretensions of the Galilean reformer. Nothing could be more appropriate, therefore, than their question, "By what authority are you doing all this, and who gave it to you?"

Of course they referred especially to his vigorous proceedings when first he entered the temple-court, but not to them alone. When they observed the authoritative tone and attitude which he assumed in addressing the multitudes upon the subject of their dearest interests, they felt that unless he could offer some adequate defence of his use of such language they ought to crush him with the sentence of absolute condemnation. So Jesus stood face to face with the honored representatives of ecclesiastical and civil authority among his people. How much must depend upon his answer! He had

¹ See pp. 5, 6.

doubtless considered beforehand what position to take up. He was not at a loss for a moment, and answered with quiet dignity, "Let me also ask a question; and if you answer it then I will tell you on what authority I rely. Tell me, Whence was the baptism of John, from heaven or of men?"

Now this was far from a mere evasion. On the contrary, it was little short of a defiance. Jesus implied that, since He who had shortly before sent John to baptize the people had now commissioned him, Jesus, to found the kingdom of God, there was an immediate connection between his own work and that of the preacher of the wilderness. Those who had recognized John as a messenger of God must and would recognize him also; whereas those who had utterly despised the Baptist had thereby given palpable proof of their total incapacity to appreciate a divine commission, and had therefore completely forfeited their right to demand his credentials from him. Did they understand his meaning? One of them, who served as the mouthpiece of the rest, answered briefly and contemptuously, "We do not know;" as much as to say "and we do not care." Our Gospels represent this answer as the result of the reflection: "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will answer, 'Then why did you not believe him?' and if we say, 'Of men,' then we shall have the people upon us, for they all hold John to have been a prophet." Luke even makes them fear that "the whole people will stone them" if they give the latter answer. But all this deliberation is out of place. The distinguished men of Jerusalem had simply paid no attention whatever to the Baptist; and Jesus therefore utterly denied their right to question him. His answer was as brief and as haughty as theirs: "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I have come forward here."

His refusal to answer was a bold stroke; but, as if to show that he knew exactly what he was doing, he continued after a moment's silence, "What think you? There was a man who had two sons, and one morning he went to the elder and said: 'My son, you must go and attend to the vineyard to-day.' But he answered without even a show of respect, 'I shall not.' And yet, after a time, he was sorry, and went and set to work. Meanwhile the father had gone to the other and found him all obedience. 'I will go this very instant, father,' he replied, but did not. Which of these two obeyed his father?" We need not suppose, with the Evangelist, that the members of the deputation actually said

"the first," for without waiting for an answer Jesus might well go on with his indignant application of the parable: "I tell you, the publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you! For John came to lead you to the way of life; and you did not believe in him, though the very publicans and harlots listened to his preaching; for not even such a sight as that could make yon repent and believe in him."

This was an open declaration of war upon the priesthood, the nobility, and the Scribes. Compare this parable with that of the prodigal son, with which it has an unmistakable affinity. How changed is the conception of the second son, who is really obedient in the one case, and is a mere hypocrite in the other!¹ It is true that in this parable Jesus had not the Pharisees exclusively in view, but this merely serves to make his judgment all the more emphatic. He embraces all the leaders of the people, the whole heterogeneous class of devout and high-born citizens who had thought it beneath their dignity to be moved by the preacher of the kingdom of God,—he embraces them all under that sentence which put "the first" after "the last." When Jesus had once told them they came after the very offscourings of society, it was impossible that any friendly relations should subsist between him and them, unless they were to throw themselves in humble penitence at his feet,—and there was small chance of that!

And yet he had done well in taking up his true position at the very outset. He had not come to Jerusalem to win over the champions of Jewish orthodoxy or the guardians of the temple worship, but the people. He must let the nation know what it had to expect from him. This he had done by opening the battle at once without any preliminary skirmishing.

It is deeply to be regretted that our authorities tell us little or nothing of the course of the struggle, and especially of the relations of Jesus and the people. Under the first head we only hear of a few argumentative encounters between Jesus and his opponents, preserved as specimens, and of certain violent denunciations uttered by Jesus in public. With these exceptions we have not a single address delivered by the Master in Jerusalem, or any thing beyond the repeated statement that he taught the people day by day. It is possible

¹ Compare pp. 248, 251.

enough that some of the specimens of his preaching we have already met with in considering his Galilæan ministry or his journey to the capital properly belong to this period;¹ but it is probable that as a rule his preaching in Jerusalem was to some extent different in tone. The Gospels, however, leave us in uncertainty as to how he instructed the multitudes in the City of the Temple, what he taught them about the kingdom of God, its approach, the blessings it would bring, the qualifications for entering it, and the last judgment and repentance. But in that saying of his about breaking down and building up the temple, which we have mentioned already, and to which the Evangelists refer in their account of the trial of Jesus, we are justified in finding the substance of a whole discourse, or perhaps even of several discourses, delivered to the people.

Again, we have only scattered hints as to the reception Jesus found at the people's hands. The statement that they took him for a prophet² seems very probable intrinsically. At any rate they could not see or even suspect the Messiah in him; while the high prophetic reputation he enjoyed is evident from the fact that the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were usually very hostile to each other, combined against him. This indicates clearly enough that they were seriously alarmed by his popularity; but the strongest proof of all is the dread with which they were inspired by his followers; for at first they dared not touch him, and only ventured to seize him at last under cover of night, with the aid of treachery; and even then they were in great trepidation, as we shall presently see.

But, on the other hand, the result showed that his party was far less numerous and zealous than had been supposed; and the final issue proves that his efforts had failed. Indeed, we have already explained how the enthusiasm kindled by his first appearance must inevitably cool when he refused to follow up the stirring deed with which he had begun, and confined himself to simple preaching. Even zealous followers were bewildered when they saw that he did not take a single step towards founding or even preparing the kingdom of God, but, on the contrary, seemed to be retreating day by day further from the goal they longed so impatiently to reach. The attitude assumed by the Scribes did Jesus incalculable harm; for of course there would be vast numbers of the Jews, both

¹ See, for instance, pp. 218, 165 ff., *et seq.*

² Matthew xxi. 46.

at Jerusalem and elsewhere, who looked for guidance to these venerated leaders, so specially qualified by their studies, they thought, to form a judgment in such matters. Now these were the very men who opposed Jesus with all their might, and their warnings held great numbers back. Perhaps he himself alludes to this in his bitter reproach : “ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites that you are ! for you shut men out of the kingdom of heaven. You will not enter yourselves, and prevent and forbid those that would ! ”

Let us now consider the records we still possess of the encounters between Jesus and his various opponents.

It was towards the beginning of his stay in Jerusalem that certain men came to him and, in a tone at once confidential and respectful, asked his opinion upon a very important point. Some of them were disciples of the Pharisaic school, and therefore bitterly opposed to the Roman supremacy over Judæa ; others were Herodians, that is to say enthusiasts for the Idumæan dynasty, who longed to restore the kingdom of Herod the Great : but all alike had been deputed to catch Jesus in his words. “ Rabbi,” they said, “ we know that you always say exactly what you think, without considering any one ; for you care not how great or powerful any one may be, but simply preach the will of God in truth. Tell us, then, what you think. May we pay tribute to the Emperor or not ? ”

It was a cunning plot. The strain of flattery in which they began shows their drift. They hoped he would declare that any one who paid the poll-tax, and so recognized the Roman emperor as his monarch, was infringing on the rights of the Lord, the king of Israel, and that God was jealous of his honor and would hold the deed apostasy. The way in which Jesus had entered the city, together with his nationality and that of his followers, gave reason to hope that he shared the opinions of Judas, the Galilæan, on the point at issue.¹ Now a popular leader who taught such seditious doctrines as this would be sure to be seized by the governor and put to death without loss of time. If, on the other hand, he declared that the tribute must be paid, that would do nearly as well, for he would at once fall in the opinion of the people.

He saw through their project. “ O hypocrites ! ” he answered, with undisguised aversion, “ why do you try to catch me thus ? Let me see the tribute money ! ” Now cer-

¹ Compare pp. 89, 348.

tain coins had been struck for use in Judæa, without the Emperor's head and with a simple inscription, on purpose to meet the Jewish objection to images; but the coin his questioners now showed to Jesus was not one of these. It was a genuine Roman denarius, representing the amount of the poll-tax. This was probably no accident. Jesus then pointed to the head and name of Tiberius on the coin, and said, "Whose image and superscription is this?" "The Emperor's," they answered. "Then give the Emperor what is the Emperor's, and God what is God's," said Jesus, as he returned the coin. He meant to say: "Since this coin shows that you are subject to the Emperor of Rome, accept the position and give him what is due; and then take care that you give to God what he has a right to expect and demand of you. It is because you have failed in your duty as God's subjects that you are now Cæsar's slaves; and as long as you fall short of your duty to God you must be content to bear the burdens laid on you by Cæsar. It is repentance, faithful self-consecration to God, and not disputes as to the permissibility of tribute,— still less resistance to a well-merited chastisement,— that must bring the great deliverance. It will not be your murmuring, but the coming of the kingdom of God, that will put an end to the supremacy of the heathen."

The design was utterly wrecked, and the questioners retired in amazement at such presence of mind.

Another day Jesus came early in the morning from the Mount of Olives¹ to the temple, where the people whom he had dismissed the evening before drew together again in great numbers; and he sat down as usual to teach them. Then there came a company of Scribes and others, well known for the strictness of their piety and their religious zeal. It was evidently an important matter that had brought them there, and their gestures and expressions indicated no small indignation and aversion, the object of which was a certain woman whom they were dragging with them in mute despair to the temple-court. The multitude made way for them respectfully. In gloomy silence they placed the unhappy woman right opposite Jesus and formed a semi-circle in front of him. Then one of them came forward and explained their object: "Rabbi, this woman is an adulteress, taken in the very act. Now Moses commands in the Law that such must be stoned; and we wish to know from you what we ought to do."

¹ See John viii. 1, and compare p. 370.

There is a difficulty here. The Law does indeed attach the penalty of death to this offence, but not specifically stoning. Nor is it quite clear what these people were aiming at, though they evidently hoped to find something in the answer upon which they could base an accusation. Had they heard that Jesus was very far from orthodox on the subject of the marriage laws? At any rate they knew that he had shown an offensive leniency towards people of bad character; so perhaps they hoped that by condoning so shameful an offence he would lower himself in the eyes of the people, and appear to sanction the grossest immorality, while at the same time giving them grounds for a legal accusation. However this may be, Jesus made no reply, — did not even rebuke their malice, — but bending down and making lines on the ground with his finger, as though he were thinking of something else, left them to their own consciences. But they did not feel this tacit rebuke, and impatiently repeated their question. Then he looked up with a piercing glance and said, “If any one of you is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her!” Then he bent down again and made lines on the ground as before. It was as much as to say, “Go on, and let the law take its course, if you can justify yourselves in doing so. If any of you can declare himself free from all impurity of thought, word, or deed, let him come forward as a witness at the trial and the execution.”¹

This shaft had struck. The pious accusers looked down. Their consciences were roused, and one by one they slunk away, the most distinguished first, troubling themselves no further about the wretched woman, who still stood riveted to the spot, half stupefied with remorse and shame. In a few moments Jesus raised his head again, and seeing no one there but his own hearers and the woman, he said to the latter, “Where are your accusers? Has not one of them condemned you?” “No, Lord!” she murmured. “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more!” said Jesus.

Then would he have left every crime unpunished? That was not the question. In referring the matter to Jesus, these men had removed it from the court of civil law into the very different court of the private conscience. Jesus therefore simply declared that God was better served by forbearing pity for the sinful woman than by the strict enforcing of the law. Judged in the court of conscience, he denied that his contemporaries, who so shamelessly contracted and dissolved

¹ Compare Deuteronomy xvii. 7.

the marriage tie without violating the Law, had any right to utter sentence on the adulteress. It seems rather improbable, however, that Jesus should have found it so easy to arouse the conscience of these self-righteous devotees; and the story, though very beautiful, is open to suspicion both on this ground and on those already hinted at. We may also add that its origin is a matter of doubt. It stands at present in the eighth chapter of John, but is certainly out of place there. It evidently belongs to the same circle of stories as those in the Synoptics, and should be placed in the account of the last conflict of Jesus. It is no longer possible for us to tell why it is not there. For the various reasons indicated, it deserves less confidence than the other records of the encounters of Jesus with the different parties among his people during the closing weeks of his life.

In the cases hitherto examined, the opponents of Jesus were intent upon drawing him into utterances in conflict with the Law, or dangerous to the public tranquillity, and so involving him with the ecclesiastical or civil authorities. But this was not always their object. Sometimes they simply tried to drive him into a corner and expose him before all the people by means of some insoluble question. A few examples of these questions also have been preserved.

One day, for instance, certain Sadducees began to argue with him about the resurrection. They probably took occasion to do so from an address to the people in which he had spoken of the coming of the kingdom of God, when the pious dead should return from the underworld and live again.¹ Now the worldly-minded and conservative Sadducees contemptuously rejected the doctrines which had risen since the formation of their own party,—such as the belief in a resurrection and the elaborate doctrine of the angels,²—especially if they had sprung from the bosom of the national party, and were fostered by the enthusiasm of the zealots, which was pre-eminently the case with the doctrine of the resurrection. Indeed, they looked with suspicion and dislike upon the preaching of the kingdom of God in general. It was but seldom that the Sadducees were among the hearers of Jesus; and this is perhaps³ the first time that we find him in contact with them, except on the single occasion of their demanding

¹ Compare pp. 331, 332.

² Acts xxiii. 8; compare p. 46.

³ See p. 242.

his authority for what he did. It seems, however, that some of them happened to be present when he was speaking on this very question of the resurrection ; so they urged a difficulty which had doubtless more than once done good service against the Pharisees. “ Rabbi ! ” they said, “ you were speaking just now of the resurrection ; but how will it be ? Take an instance. You know the Law of Moses says that when a man dies childless, his brother must marry his widow, and the eldest son must bear the dead man’s name.¹ Now there was once a family of seven brothers ; and the eldest of them married, but died childless, — so the next took his widow ; but he died without children too, and the widow was taken by the third. And so it went on till all the seven brothers had married her, — and all had died childless. Finally the woman died herself. Now when they all rise again, whose wife will she be ? — for all the seven were married to her ! ”

Whether this had really occurred or not was a matter of no consequence. It was possible ; and that was enough to give the Sadducees a right to treat it as actual. We must also concede that it raised an unanswerable objection to the doctrine of the resurrection as conceived by the Jews, — that is to say, as a renewal under more favorable circumstances of the former life. But for Jesus the difficulty did not exist ; for he had formed a far more spiritual conception of the new life in the kingdom of God. So he struck the broad principle at once and went to the very root of the matter in his answer, — which may be paraphrased thus : “ The denial of the resurrection rests upon a two-fold misconception, — upon want of insight into the Holy Scriptures, and misapprehension of the power of God revealed in the saints. For they neither marry nor are given in marriage when they have risen again, but live here on earth as the angels live in heaven : such is the power of God revealed in his children. And, as for the doctrine of the Scriptures about a new life following after death, have you never read the chapter of the ‘ Thornbush,’ in the books of Moses,² where God says, ‘ I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob ’ ? Now, surely, He is the God of the living and not of the dead ! ”

It must be admitted that Jesus put a far deeper and richer meaning into the text he quoted than it originally had, but this does not at all surprise us ;³ and, judged by the rules of

¹ See vol. i. pp. 425 ff.
² Compare pp. 224 ff.

² See vol. i. p. 255.

interpretation and style of argument current at the time, his proof of immortality was so complete that his questioners were absolutely silenced and his hearers were filled with amazement. He meant, "If God called himself the God of the patriarchs centuries after they were dead, we are forced to the conclusion that they are not dead for ever, but will rise again. He is too great to be a God of lifeless shades; and man, whose God he deigns to call himself, is too great to remain a shadow for eternity. And when the power of God reveals itself in all its glory at the resurrection, relations will spring up between man and man upon the renovated earth so completely unlike those known at present that they can only fitly be compared with the intercourse of angels." Luke, the latest of our three Evangelists, elaborates the words of Jesus thus:¹ "Those who dwell in the world as it now is marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to rise from the dead and share the perfect life that shall be will no longer marry or be given in marriage. Neither will they any longer be subject to death, for they will be like the angels; and, inasmuch as they share the resurrection, they will have a portion in the life and glory of God himself. And as for the shades, read the chapter of the 'Thornbush,' where God says, 'I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob!' Now, surely, He is the God of the living and not of the dead; for in His eye the shades have already risen." Such additions to the words of Jesus may well be justified on the principle that the exalted conceptions seized and uttered by him necessarily imply still more than he himself could see, through the trammels laid upon him by the current notions of his age. If he expected the power of God to wake a new and glorious form of life in the faithful at the hour of the resurrection, after a more or less protracted sleep in death, we are justified in going a step further and rising to the hope that the spirit of man, educated and hallowed by God in this life, will rise at once to the higher life at the very moment of death. If he thought the bond between God and his dutiful children too close to be finally loosed by death, we accept the thought in all its fulness, and declare that not only is it impossible for this tie to be broken eternally, but it cannot be broken for a moment! God's children cannot be lifeless shadows even for a time. In a word, Jesus was defending the belief that we shall *return to life*; but in doing so he laid the firm foundation for the hope that we shall *never die*.

¹ Luke xx. 34-38.

There were probably certain Pharisees present at this encounter ; and in any case it soon came to their ears that Jesus had silenced their opponents on the very point upon which they had so often disputed with them. Under other circumstances this would have given them great delight ; but, since they were just now combining with their natural enemies against this formidable rival, they found small satisfaction in their discomfiture. They laid their heads together, and one of them who was deeply read in the Law took occasion, probably by the Master's teaching on some other day, to ask him a test question often discussed in the rabbinical schools : “ Rabbi, which is the first commandment in the Law ? ” Without reserve or ambiguity Jesus answered, “ ‘ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and sense.’¹ This is the first great commandment. And the second is like it, and is this : ‘ Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’² On these two commandments all the Law and the Prophets are built.”

Luke does not mention this conversation here,³ but makes the Scribes applaud Jesus for having refuted the Sadducees. In this he follows Mark, who represents the questioner as coming to Jesus without any sinister design whatever, and testifying to his complete agreement with him by enthusiastically repeating his answer : “ Yes, Rabbi ! it is true. The Lord our God is the one Lord,⁴ and there is no God but He ; and to love Him with all the heart and mind and strength, and to love one’s neighbor as one’s self, is more than any sacrifice or burnt offering.” Then Jesus, on his side, testifies to the Scribe’s true insight in the words, “ You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

Whatever we may think of these divergences they do not touch the essence of the matter, which is the conjunction by Jesus of these two verses from the fifth and the third book of Moses. This is far more than a lucky hit. Jesus uttered his whole soul in it. With good cause has Christendom devoted its special attention to these words, and attached the utmost value to them. They tell us what Jesus held to be the essence of religion, for we must not suppose that he was summing up the Israelitish religion in distinction from his own. In the first place he never recognized any such distinction ; for we know that, in his attack upon the conception of piety current in his own generation, he regarded himself

¹ Deuteronomy vi. 5.

² See pp. 298–301.

³ Leviticus xix. 18.

⁴ Deuteronomy vi. 4.

as at one with Moses and the prophets. And, besides this, God, whom he would have man love with all his being, is no longer really Israel's Yahweh; nor is a man's neighbor any longer his fellow-countryman and fellow-believer only: so that Jesus, in point of fact, is not summing up the old Israelite religion, but the new religion that had grown out of it under his own vivifying touch.¹ Finally, remember that "these two commandments" do not stand over against each other as essentially distinct. Jesus would have us love our neighbors and ourselves for God's sake, and as children of God; or, in other words, he would have us love God *in* our neighbor and ourself. Without intending it, Jesus sketches in these two strokes his own individuality and his own life.

We have now seen Jesus attacked and put to the test again and again, and have had ample occasion to admire the clearness of insight and presence of mind which invariably gave him a ready answer and enabled him triumphantly to maintain the position he had taken. Nay, the attempts to injure him have but served to throw an ever stronger light upon his religious and moral greatness, and have therefore taught us to understand him better and to reverence him more.



CHAPTER XXXI.

JESUS TAKES THE AGGRESSIVE.

MATTHEW XXII. 41-46, XXIII. 1-7, 16-28; LUKE XI. 52, 47, 48, XX. 47, XVI. 19-31; MARK XII. 1-12, XIV. 1, 2.²

HIITHERTO we have only seen Jesus defending himself against the plots of his enemies. But gradually a change took place, and those who had at first thrown themselves in his way with overweening confidence now drew back. They were no match for him. His controversial triumph was complete. No one, we are told, dared question him further, and we have no more records of his opponents intentionally drawing him into disputes. Upon this Jesus changed his

¹ Compare pp. 228 ff., 230 ff.

² Matthew xxiii. 13, 29-32, xxi. 33-46, xxvi. 3-5; Mark xii. 34 b-40; Luke xxi. 40-46, xi. 39-46, xx. 9-19, xxii. 1, 2.

own attitude and took the offensive. A few specimens of his attacks are preserved.

"How can the Scribes say that the Messiah is David's son?" he once exclaimed in the temple, before a crowd of hearers. "For David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declares, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand till I have cast thine enemies beneath thy feet!' Now if David himself calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his own son?"

It is true that Psalm cx., the opening lines of which are quoted by Jesus as sacred or inspired Scripture, was not composed by David and does not contain any words addressed to the Messiah; but this raises no real difficulty, for both Jesus and his contemporaries accepted the Davidic authorship and Messianic significance of the psalm upon which the argument is built, without the least reserve. The bearing of the argument itself, however, is far from clear. Is it possible that the foes of Jesus had heard of his pretensions to being the Messiah; that they had attempted to disarm them by reminding the people that he was not a descendant of David, and that Jesus therefore wished to show that the Messiah was not a son of David at all? Or did he simply intend to point out that the Scriptures themselves represented the assumed Davidic origin of the Messiah as a matter of no moment, since the founder of the kingdom of God had a higher title than that of Son of David? This is the sense in which the first Evangelist appears to have understood him. He makes Jesus say to the assembled Pharisees, "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They answer unhesitatingly, "David's." And Jesus then refers them to the verses of the psalm already quoted, and concludes: "If David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" In any case these words distinctly implied that Jesus did not conceive of the Messiah as a king after the model of David.

Hostility ran ever higher. Jesus did not shrink from openly attacking his opponents and exposing them before the people. The Scribes, who gave the whole Pharisaic school its tone, incurred his special indignation. What must the people have thought of the sentence they heard him utter upon their pious leaders at the very focus of Jewish orthodoxy and headquarters of formalism! We have already had special occasion¹ to give a few specimens of his preach-

¹ See pp. 375 ff., and p. 292.

ing against the Pharisees, but we will now repeat them in the characteristic though less original form in which they appear in Luke : —

“ Woe to you, learned ones in the Law ! for you have taken away the key of knowledge. You stay outside yourselves, and keep out those that try to enter. Woe to you ! for you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers murdered them. Thus do you testify your approval of your fathers’ deeds ; for they committed the murder, and you perpetuate its memory ! ”

Jesus also made a fierce onslaught upon the scholastic hair-splitting that trod true holiness in the dust and unmanned the conscience. A melancholy instance was furnished by the opinions of the Scribes on the subject of oaths. We know what Jesus himself thought about them,¹ and can therefore understand his indignation against all the subterfuges and qualifications of the schools. “ Woe to you, blind guides ! for you say, ‘ If a man swears by the temple, it is nothing ; but if he swears by the gold of the temple, it is binding.’ Fools and blind ! Is the gold more than the temple which makes it sacred ? Or again : ‘ If a man swears by the altar, it is nothing ; but if he swears by the sacrifice upon the altar, he must keep his oath.’ Blind that you are ! Is the sacrifice more than the altar that makes it sacred ? I tell you, whoever swears by the altar swears by all that is on it too ; and whoever swears by the temple swears by Him who dwells in it ; and whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.”

In the same way he mercilessly scourges the pitiful formalism so scrupulously anxious about trifles, and yet so wide of swallow with regard to veritable sins. “ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites that you are ! for you take care that the tithes of mint and anise and cummin are duly paid, but neglect the weightier matters of the Law,—justice, mercy, and integrity. In observing the one how dare you to neglect the other ? Blind guides that you are ! straining out gnats and swallowing camels ! Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for you cleanse the outside of cup and platter, but the inside is full of plunder and license. Blind Pharisee ! first clean the inside of the cup, and then the outside will be clean also. Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites that you are ! you are like so many whitewashed graves that seem all pure outside, but are full of dead men’s

¹ See pp. 226, 227.

bones and all uncleanness within. So do you seem righteous externally, but within are full of hypocrisy and evasion of the Law."

We may note that this denunciation deals throughout with the question of cleanliness.¹ It begins by referring to the scrupulous piety that would not for the world make use of the smallest garden herbs without first making sure that the tithes, though of hardly any value, had been duly paid; for otherwise they would be unclean and would pollute all those that used them. The conclusion alludes to the custom of the people of Jerusalem of whitewashing the tombs every year a month before Passover. The object was to warn the travellers not to come too near these unclean places; and just so the ostentatious display of cleanliness on the part of the Pharisees seemed to Jesus like a warning that all manner of wickedness lay concealed behind it. Luke did not understand the reference, and lost the point by turning the saying thus: "Woe to you! for you are like hidden graves that men may walk upon unwittingly."

But this does not affect the essential point. "What a sweeping condemnation!" we are tempted to exclaim. But remember that these words were uttered at Jerusalem; and, to understand the change that had come over the Master's feelings with regard to Pharisaism, we must bear in mind not only the growing hostility on either side, but the fact that here in the City of the Temple orthodoxy was driven to its extremest consequences and appeared in all its accursed moral sterility. Indeed, there was a Jewish proverb to the effect that nine out of every ten hypocrites in the world might be found at Jerusalem. Even in Galilee Jesus might have said, as he did now before all the people in Jerusalem, "Beware of the Scribes, who take such delight in pacing along the streets in their long gowns, in receiving the respectful salutation of 'Rabbi' in the market place, in taking the front seats in the synagogues, and reclining in the best places at suppers! They do all their pious deeds in the hope of being seen. Look how broad they make the ribbons written over with texts that they bind round their brows and their left arms when they pray, and how deep the fringes of their mantles are!"² But it was only here in Jerusalem, at the very centre of Judaism, where the fatal principles of formalism had so long spread unchecked in rank luxuriance, it was only here that he could fairly reproach the Pharisees in such words as

¹ Compare pp. 276, 277.

² See p. 250.

these : “ They bind heavy burdens that none can bear, and lay them upon men’s shoulders ; but they themselves will not touch them with their little fingers ! They devour widows’ houses, and make long prayers to save appearances. All the heavier is the judgment they are bringing down upon their heads ! ” It need not surprise us to hear all this. Outward piety too often leads to formalism, and formalism to hypocrisy.

We must here observe that the several denunciations of the Pharisees, and more especially of the Scribes and lawyers, have not come down to us in their original form and connection. Luke, for instance, represents the greater part of them as uttered on the journey, and moreover in the house of a Pharisee who was entertaining Jesus.¹ Nothing could be more inappropriate than this. Luke’s Ebionite authority makes Jesus, after declaring that the contents of the cup and platter were acquired by injustice and avarice, add the words, “ Ah, fools ! Did not He who made the outside make the inside too ? Then give away that which is inside in alms, and behold it will all be clean for you ! ”

The first Gospel, though it only gives a few specimens of the preaching of Jesus at Jerusalem against the popular leaders, is fuller than either of the others ; but to say nothing of its stringing together sayings which were uttered upon different days and upon different occasions, and taking up fragments that are quite out of place, it introduces the whole with the following words, which certainly rose in Jewish-Christian circles, and are absolutely opposed to what Jesus meant : “ The Scribes and Pharisees have sat down upon the seat of Moses ; therefore, whatever they tell you, observe and do it ; but do not imitate their deeds, for their precepts are fair while their lives are foul.” Observe and do what they command ! As if this were not in absolute contradiction with what follows ! As if Jesus had not come to Jerusalem for the very purpose of breaking their yoke !

And here we may naturally ask whether there are no threats or denunciations launched by Jesus against the party of the Sadducees. The third Gospel does indeed contain a picture which strongly reminds us of the haughty and ostentatious priestly nobility, with its selfish neglect and contempt of the lower classes. We will reproduce it here ; for if any of its lines were drawn by the hand of Jesus, it can only have

¹ See p. 244.

been at this period. We must premise, however, that the story in which it is embodied cannot possibly be genuine as a whole. It is known as "the rich man and Lazarus."

Once there was a rich man who was clothed in the costliest robes,—a cloak of purple wool and an under garment of fine Egyptian linen,—and who fared sumptuously every day. At the portico of his noble mansion there lay a wretched beggar of the name of Lazarus, all covered with sores, glad if he might satisfy his hunger with the fragments that fell from the rich man's table; and even these he must share with the dogs of the street that came running up when the broken meats were thrown out. Nay,—lowest depth of humiliation!—these dogs would come and lick his wounds, so familiar had they grown with him. Thus for a while he lived the life of a dog, and then he died; but, as he breathed his last, the angels came and bore him to the paradise in the underworld, to lay him in the bosom of Abraham, in a place of honor at the feast of the provisionally blessed. And into the sumptuous hall Death likewise came and snatched the owner of the palace from the midst of his abundance and enjoyment; but he, while the last honors were being paid him upon earth with lavish care, while his corpse was being richly embalmed and laid in earth as befitted his high rank, went down into the regions of death, to the fire of Gehenna. Here as he lay, tortured with unutterable pain, he raised his eyes and saw far off the feast of the Father of the Faithful, reclining on whose couch he discerned the man who had once been a beggar at his gate. Then he could not restrain the prayer for a moment's respite. "Father Abraham!" he cried, "have pity on me, and let Lazarus come here to dip the tip of his finger in the water and cool my tongue, for I am tortured in these flames." But not even this could be granted him. "Child!" answered Abraham, "remember that you received your full share of blessings in your life, and Lazarus nothing but misery; and, therefore, he is now received here with a loving welcome, while you are in torture. And, besides all this, there is a deep chasm gaping wide between us which none could pass, how great soever his desire, either from us to you or from you to us." The wretched man now saw that there was no more hope for him; but he had still a petition left: "Then, father! send him to my kindred, for I have still five brothers; and let him urge them to beware lest they, too, come into this place of torment." But even this request was refused, not as impossi-

ble, but as useless. "They have Moses and the Prophets. Let them listen to them," said Abraham. But the other, remembering only too well how he had known the Scriptures himself, but had scattered their warnings to the winds, made one last appeal: "Nay, but Father Abraham, if a man were to rise from the realms of the dead, then they would repent." The hope was vain, and the appeal was therefore bootless. "If they will not listen to Moses and the Prophets," said the patriarch in conclusion, "they would not be convinced though one should rise from the dead."

This is unquestionably a composite story. Luke appears to have had in view the heathen world shut out from every hope and blessing in contrast to the privileged but pitiless Jews; but this cannot have been the original significance of Lazarus and the rich man. And even apart from the modifications introduced by the Evangelist in accordance with his own conception, the story is evidently not a single whole. The latter part, perhaps from "and besides all this," is an addition; and in any case the request that Lazarus may be sent to earth and all that follows it has no connection with what goes before. If we go on to ask the meaning of the whole and of the separate details, we have no difficulty, to begin with, in recognizing a very marked Ebionite spirit. The rich man is accused of nothing but spending his treasures for his own enjoyment. There is not so much as a hint that he was irreligious or unfeeling. And Lazarus tastes the joys of paradise not for his piety, but simply as a compensation for his misery upon earth. Nor does the repentance which the Law and Prophets should produce mean any thing else than the distribution of all one's wealth in alms.¹ Equally obvious is the concluding blow at the disbelief of the Jewish aristocracy which would not even yield to the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.² Yet another proof of the late origin of the parable is the representation of a state of provisional compensation in the shadow-land before the resurrection. Such a conception was certainly foreign to Jesus himself.

This is the only parable in which a proper name occurs; and this point has naturally given rise to no little speculation. Perhaps the name Lazarus, which is the same as Eleazar, is merely symbolical, and should be taken in its original signification as "God-help." Perhaps, too, the beggar is called

¹ Luke vi. 24, xvi. 9, 11, xi. 41.

² Acts iv. 1 ff., 23, v. 17.

after Abraham's servant,¹ who had become the type of the faithful slave, the virtuous member of the lower classes. If so, Lazarus perhaps represents the humbler classes in general, regarded of course in the most favorable possible light. In that case it is exceedingly possible that the rich man represents the distinguished and luxurious priestly order. The Jewish tradition tells of the gold and silver dinner-services of the Sadducees; and it is well known that they troubled themselves very little about the common people, and placed them almost on a level with the heathen. The dogs, which were not domestic animals but were loathed as unclean beasts, certainly represent the heathen. Finally, one might be tempted to find in the five brothers of the rich man a reference to the most distinguished of the high-priestly families, namely that of Annas; for Josephus tells us that this man was pronounced the most enviable of mortals because, after filling the office of high priest for many years himself, he subsequently saw it held by each of his five sons. Meanwhile we must leave it uncertain how far this parable may be founded upon some saying or description of Jesus, some reproach he hurled at the Sadducees, or some threat that the position of things should one day be reversed.

The tension had gradually reached its height. We possess a clear indication of this in a parable, most likely due to Jesus himself, placed by all three Evangelists in this period, and characterizing the last hours of the conflict with the overpowering foe. We must picture Jesus in the temple, shortly before he left it for the last time, speaking in the hearing not only of the multitudes but of several of the high priests and Scribes, who had lately given up all attempts to conceal their anger and aversion. It was an imitation of a denunciation by the prophet Isaiah,² which he began in sombre tones as follows:—

A certain man planted a vineyard, set a hedge round it, sunk a wine-press, and built a watch-tower; and when every thing was complete let out the vineyard to a company of husbandmen for a stated portion of the produce, and went himself into a foreign land. So when the grape harvest had come, he sent one of his servants to his tenants to receive his share of the fruits. But the tenants seized the servant and beat him and sent him back empty-handed. Then the owner sent another servant, but they wounded him in the head and mal-

¹ See vol. i. pp. 155-161.

² See vol. ii. p. 251.

treated him shamefully. Still he sent another, but they killed him. Then he sent many more, but they maltreated some and killed others. His forbearance was not yet exhausted, and at last he sent his son ; for he thought "at least they will respect my son." But when the husbandmen saw him, they said to each other, "There is the heir ! Let us kill him and keep his heritage ourselves." So they seized him, and dragged him outside the vineyard, and slew him.

After a moment's pause, Jesus went on with an emphasis that could not be mistaken : "Now when the master of the vineyard returns, what will he do to the husbandmen ? He will put those wretches to the death that they deserve, and give the vineyard to others who will bring him the fruits in due season." After another moment's pause he concluded : "Have you never read that passage of the scripture,¹ 'The stone which the builders rejected is made the chief cornerstone ; it was the Lord that made it so, and it is wonderful in our eyes ?'"

So we read in all three Gospels, with only unimportant variations. But Matthew and Luke have each of them a few words more ; the latter,² following up the metaphor of the stone, says : "Whoever falls on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it falls it shall dash him to pieces ;" the former, interpreting the story itself, adds : "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a people that brings forth its fruits." Both of these sayings may very well be genuine, though the last of them is out of place. They both of them illustrate the thought of the discourse, if it needs any further illustration.³ Jesus sketches with moving and startling distinctness God's rule over Israel, who has cast his warnings to the wind, who has maltreated and slain the prophets in times past, and is on the point of laying murderous hands upon the Messiah now ; together with the certainty of the approaching judgment now that the last effort has failed. In conclusion, he foreshadows in a single breath his own rejection and exaltation, with the assurance that the guilt of men cannot really thwart the purpose of God to raise the new Temple of which he, the Messiah, will be as it were the foundation. Meanwhile we have never heard such gloomy words from him before ; and this is not surprising, for now that the contest is as good as over,

¹ Psalm cxviii. 22, 23.

² Matthew xxi. 44 is not genuine.

³ Compare pp. 297, 298.

the tone of deliberate announcement naturally takes the place of menacing appeal.

There still remain two points for our consideration. The Evangelists place this parable immediately after the conversation about the authority of Jesus and the baptism of John.¹ Now, the connection of thought, "You who have rejected John, the last of the prophets, will lay hands upon me also," is very marked, and in so far the arrangement is a good one. But, for all that, the parable is certainly out of place at the commencement of the work of Jesus in Jerusalem. How could the courteous forms of address and controversy we have witnessed be possible after the utterance of such a sentence? And at that early period it would have been a needlessly exasperating defiance, and would not even have been true, for no definite determination had as yet been reached to make away with Jesus. And since this parable is clearly the last public utterance of the Master in the hearing of his enemies, it is exceedingly noteworthy that it contains the first distinct assertion he ever made before them of the significance of his person and his office. Here he ranks himself above the prophets, and speaks of himself as the corner-stone of the edifice of God. He exclaims to them, as it were, "However obstinately you refuse to recognize me, I am the man—I declare it plainly—who is to found the kingdom of God."

And this brings us to our second observation. The Gospels are more or less uncertain as to whether the parable refers to the people of Israel or to their leaders, the Scribes and High Priests. The fact is that though there were many of the common people who took the side of Jesus, with or without hesitation, yet on the whole the leaders had Israel as a people with them. But for that very reason, although the historical interpretation and the comparison of other passages in which the metaphor of the vineyard appears compel us to think of Israel as a whole, yet the parable is aimed in the first instance and almost exclusively against the leaders. They are the builders who reject the stone; it is they who are determined to keep the inheritance; that is to say, to maintain their influence and supremacy, cost what it may. When the kingdom of God is given to a new people of the Lord, recruited from the common herd of Israel, from sinners and from heathen,—then the leaders who have dashed themselves against this stone will pay a fearful penalty!

¹ See pp. 371, 372.

We may therefore well believe that after this parable had been uttered the authorities endeavored to lay hold of Jesus, and were only restrained from instantly taking active measures because they feared a rising of the people who held Jesus for a prophet, or at least apprehended a violent resistance on the part of his followers. They were only restrained for the moment! Jesus had not spoken of the murderous thoughts of the husbandmen without good cause. His sentence was already as good as passed.

According to the first two Gospels it was on Thursday evening, the twelfth of Nisan, two nights and days before the Passover began, that a meeting of members of the Sanhedrim was held at the house of the High Priest Caiaphas, to consider how best to get hold of the Nazarene and make away with him. It was determined, in the first place, not to seize him publicly, but to snatch him away in secret; and, in the second place, to wait till the festival was over, for if any thing were attempted during the excitement of the feast, it might give rise to disturbances of which it was impossible to foresee the issue. This would defer all active measures for a full week; but Jesus would probably remain in Jerusalem as long as that, and if he did not he could be pursued. By that time the strangers, including the Galilæans, would be gone, and most of the followers of Jesus with them. Any who might still remain would be too few in number to be formidable, especially when once the feast was well over; and as to the people of Jerusalem, they had remained throughout either hostile or indifferent to the Galilæan leader, and caused his enemies no uneasiness whatever.

To this it must inevitably come. The parable of the husbandmen was hard upon its fulfilment. The conflict was at an end,— and the end was what Jesus had expected.

CHAPTER XXXII.

JESUS AMONG FRIENDS.

LUKE XXI. 1-4, XVI. 1-9, 11, 12, 14; MATTHEW X. 41, 42, 16-23,
XXIII. 8-12, 34-39, XXI. 18-20, XXIV. 1-3 ff., 42-51, XXV. 1-13,
XXVI. 1, 2, 6-18.¹

HITHERTO we have seen Jesus at Jerusalem almost exclusively confronted with his enemies. But now that we have traced the progress and the close of the decisive conflict which he had to wage, we must return upon our steps a little to prevent or rectify what would be the great mistake of supposing that during the closing weeks of his life he had had nothing but intensely painful encounters, had been exclusively busied with controversies and denunciations. We must think of him really as spending a great portion of his time amid more congenial surroundings and in happier labors, under the hospitable roof at Bethany, with new-made friends in Jerusalem itself,² walking at morn or even with the Twelve (sometimes accompanied by other faithful followers), or moving in the larger circle of his adherents. We know, on the best authority,³ that very soon after the death of Jesus a band of no less than five hundred persons faithfully attached to him were found together, probably in Galilee; and very nearly all of these would certainly be at Jerusalem just now.

We may take for granted not only that Jesus was frequently alone with his friends, but that from time to time he addressed himself exclusively to them, even when strangers were present in greater or smaller numbers. An instance of what I mean is furnished by the following touching scene, which also serves to show how carefully Jesus continued the moral education of his disciples to the very last.

Once he had gone with his friends through the outer court, up the fourteen steps of the higher terrace, and through the magnificent gate of Nicanor, to seat himself beneath the colonnade. The Jewish women were not allowed to penetrate further than this into the sacred enclosure; and this part of the

¹ Mark xii. 41-44, ix. 41, xiii. 9-13, xi. 12-14, 20, 21, xiii. 1-4 ff., 33-37, xiv. 3-9; Luke x. 3, xxi. 12-19, xi. 49-51, xiii. 34, 35, xxi. 5-7 ff., xvii. 22 ff., xii. 35-48.

² See p. 185.

³ 1 Corinthians xv. 6.

Court of the People was therefore usually known as the Court of the Women, although it was frequented by Israelites of both sexes, and was sometimes even used for popular assemblies. Here, too, was the treasure-house, with its thirteen brazen funnels shaped like trumpets, ready to receive the free-will or the stated offerings to God ; that is to say, the contributions in support of the various branches of the temple service. In this last century the temple treasure often rose to an enormous sum. Here Jesus, always the same keen observer, sat and watched the people dropping their contributions into the money-boxes. Most of the coins were copper ; but now and then a richer worshipper would throw in gold or silver, not without an air of pompous satisfaction with himself. Then came a woman, thinly clad in widow's weeds, and timidly stretched out her hand to drop two little coins into the box, that together made one farthing. Was she pushed aside to make room for others with richer offerings ? Did Jesus trace a smile upon some face that seemed to say, "She need hardly have troubled herself to come here with a farthing" ? At any rate, the disciples had observed her, and understood their Master when he cried in deep emotion, " I tell you, that poor widow has given more than all of them ; for they have given from their abundance, but she in her penury has thrown in, it may be, all that she had."

Jesus did not simply mean that real goodness only exists where some self-sacrifice is involved, but above all he intended to enforce the pervading principle of his life and thought ; namely, the value of small things and of "the little ones." His disciples, like all of us, were led away by outward appearances and needed this lesson constantly, and now perhaps more than ever.¹ On another occasion he reminded them in the same spirit that every service done for God, though so small that no one notices it, is yet observed by Him, and will not want its recompense. "Whoever receives a prophet into his home because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward when the kingdom comes ; and whoever receives a virtuous man because he is a virtuous man shall receive a virtuous man's reward. And if any one gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of my humblest disciples because he is a disciple, not even he shall lose his reward."²

Nor did he forget to repeat his exhortations to humility and simplicity,³ if we may judge by the following words ad-

¹ See p. 342.

² See p. 352.

² See p. 167.

dressed to his disciples. They appear in connection with his exposure of the vanity and love of honor displayed by the Pharisaic Scribes.¹ "Never allow people to call you Rabbi, for you have one teacher and you are all brothers. And call no one on earth your father,² for you have one Father [who is in heaven]. And let no one call you leaders, for you have one leader [the Christ]. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

And moreover, in contemplation of the probable issue of the struggle, Jesus availed himself of the interval that still remained to prepare his followers in general, but especially the Twelve, for the task that awaited them when he was gone. With this view he diligently instructed them, and exhorted them to labor zealously and faithfully for the kingdom of God. Here we should be inclined to place many a charge to spread the gospel of the kingdom without fear of men; many an exhortation cheerfully to endure the fiercest violence of opposition, which we have already given.³ Some of his sayings unmistakably proclaim themselves as having been uttered at Jerusalem. Among these is one of undoubted authenticity, preserved in an early Christian work and by the ecclesiastical Fathers, though not to be found in the New Testament: "Make yourselves tried money-changers!" In Jerusalem Jesus had watched the money-changers at their tables, and had observed their knowledge of different coinages, their quickness, their assiduity, and their great profits. In Galilee he had borrowed images from the work of fishermen and peasants, and now he made the trade of money-changing illustrate the work of the kingdom of God. "Make your eyes as quick as theirs," he would say, "to distinguish instantly between the false and true; be as rapid and unwearied in adapting yourselves to each one's requirements, and make your profits as large, — but more honorable." It was a similar thought that he worked out in the parable of the talents which we have already examined,⁴ though it properly belongs to the period we are now considering.

The third Gospel further puts into the mouth of Jesus several sayings and one elaborate story borrowed from money transactions, but very different in scope and purpose from the others, as we shall see at once. The story runs as follows: —

¹ See p. 385.

² See pp. 190, 170 ff.

³ Compare vol. i. p. 455.

⁴ See pp. 165, 166.

Once there was a rich man who had an agent or steward. In those days such a post was one of greatest trust, and conferred the widest discretionary powers upon him who held it, for, indeed, he was almost irresponsible in the exercise of his office. Now this steward was accused to his patron of running through the estate by his extravagance, upon which the latter summoned him and said : " What is this that I hear of you ? Make up your books, for you must quit my service." The man was at his wits' end. In a few days he would have given up his books, and would be turned penniless into the world. " What must I do," he thought to himself, " when dismissed from my master's service ? I cannot work in the fields, and shame forbids me to beg by the road-side." A sudden thought occurred to him. " I know what to do ! When I am dismissed there will be houses enough open to me !" He summoned his master's debtors, one by one, without loss of time. The first who came rented an olive-yard for which he was in arrears. " How much do you owe us ? " asked the agent. " A hundred casks of oil," he answered timidly. " Fifty will do," replied the agent ; " here is your acknowledgment of the debt. Sit down and change the figure to fifty ; but make haste !" Then came the second, a tenant farmer, who had not paid his rent for the current year. " Well, and what do you owe us ? " he said, as he searched among his papers for the memorandum of the debt. " A hundred sacks of wheat," he answered gloomily. " I will let you off twenty. There, take the memorandum back and fill it in for eighty." And so he went on. The debtors who had come with such heavy hearts had nearly equal sums remitted to them in every case ; and the agent, without exceeding the limits of the powers he still possessed, and without rendering himself liable to any legal proceedings, had earned the hearty gratitude of all the tenants. Even his patron, though his own interests had been sacrificed, could not help admiring the shrewdness with which his steward, at the last moment, had secured support and protection at the hands of those whom he had laid under such great obligations.

" For the children of this world," continues the narrator, as he goes on to the application of the story, " are wiser and more sensible in their dealings with each other than the children of light, and might well serve as models of foresight and prudence to them. You, too, should make friends by means of that evil Mammon, that lucre to which so much unrighteousness adheres, that when you have lost it the friends it

has made you may take you into the dwellings of the kingdom of God. If you have not dealt faithfully with such pitiful wealth as that, who would ever entrust you with the true wealth, the highest blessing? And if you have not dealt faithfully with that which can never really be yours, who would entrust you with your own true inheritance?"

We see at once that it is not Jesus who speaks, but the man whose hand we have so often recognized before in the third Gospel,—the man who considers poverty a glory and a merit, and declares that earthly wealth which is not ours, but belongs to Mammon, the god of wealth or the god of the present age, is good for nothing whatever but to be given away in alms. If so used it brings its owner, or rather its administrator, to the kingdom of Heaven; otherwise to Gehenna. We may further note that the writer, who puts this doctrine into the mouth of Jesus, takes the opportunity of saying that the Pharisees were covetous, though this was far from being their specially besetting sin. We shall presently meet with a very different picture of a steward in the Gospels,—in this case, perhaps, authentic.

"Be faithful in your calling!" Such was the exhortation which constantly recurred in the Master's conversations with his friends; but he did not conceal the difficulties that awaited them, and, when speaking of the work henceforth committed to them, he represented the future as any thing but bright with promise. "I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves. Be as cautious as serpents and as harmless as doves! Beware of men, for they will drag you before the judgment seats, and beat you with rods in their synagogues.¹ But when they give you up to justice take no thought beforehand as to how or what to speak in your defence; for what you are to say will be given you at the time, for it is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaks in you. Brother shall give up brother to death, and father child; and children shall rise up against their parents to compass their death. And you shall be hated by every one, because you are my disciples; but those who endure to the end shall attain to the kingdom of God. So, when you are driven out of one city take refuge in another; for verily you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man shall come."

This final word of encouragement is open to the gravest suspicion, at any rate in its present form; nor can Jesus

¹ See p. 198; and compare Matthew xxiv. 9, 13.

have used the language attributed to him by Luke: “I myself will give you such courage and wisdom that none of your adversaries will have power to resist or contradict you.” And finally, the addition made by all the Evangelists, “and you shall also be brought before governors and kings for my sake, as a witness to them and to the heathen,” is obviously borrowed from the actual event.¹

But enough! After deducting all the later additions, we have still the means of forming some idea of the line adopted by Jesus during the closing weeks of his life in preparing his faithful disciples for their glorious but arduous task.

It seems that Jesus gradually drew back more and more into the circle of his friends. At any rate it is open to doubt whether he continued his public teaching in Jerusalem to the very last. Perhaps the authorities of the temple had taken steps to exclude him from the sacred precincts, and he kept out of their way to avoid tumultuous and violent collisions. But all this is simply a conjecture, and only rests upon the fact that we find him, one or two days before the Passover apparently, at a meal in Bethany, and on the Thursday morning, when the festival was to begin at even, he sent two of his disciples to the city in advance, and himself, perhaps, remained with his host till the afternoon.

It has indeed been imagined that Jesus expressly bade farewell to Jerusalem in a saying still preserved. For at the close of the attack upon the Scribes and Pharisees occurs a passage which we shall presently give in full, concluding with the words addressed to the citizens of Jerusalem: “I tell you, you shall see me no more till the time when you shall say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” From this enigmatical saying it has even been inferred that Jesus thought of returning to Galilee. But the fact is that the whole passage which these words conclude seems to be a citation from some lost work of the Jewish-Christian school. There are other sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels which likewise point to the existence of such a work, composed a little before the fall of the Jewish state. Perhaps it resembled the contemporary book of Revelation, and at any rate took the form of an oracle containing a description of the approaching end of the world and establishment of the kingdom of God.² We shall presently return³ to the evi-

¹ Compare Acts xxiii. 33, xxv. 6, 23.

² See pp. 22, 24.

³ See p. 402.

dence that such a book existed and was used by the Evangelists; but meanwhile we will give the whole passage of which we are now speaking. Though the words are put into the mouth of Jesus in the Gospels, yet in the original work they must have been uttered by the "Wisdom of God,"¹ which is equivalent to his Spirit or Revelation.

"Behold! I send prophets and sages and Scribes to you; and some of them you will slay and crucify, and others you will scourge in your synagogues and pursue from city to city; that upon you may come [that is, that you may be held responsible for] all the righteous blood that has been shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Berechiah, whom you slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you it shall all come upon this generation!"

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou who slayest the prophets and stonest those that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! But now I withdraw my protecting hand from your house, and you shall no more see me till the time when you shall say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Here Wisdom, or more plainly God himself, complains of the chosen people. For a short time He will surrender Israel to punishment, till the kingdom of God shall come in its glory. Now the date of these verses may be gathered with great precision from the mention of Zechariah's murder as the latest deed of its kind. Of course this man is not the son of Jehoiada who was stoned more than eight and a half centuries before,² but a certain man whom Josephus speaks of as a rich and noble citizen, whose hatred of all evil and love of freedom exposed him to the enmity of the zealots. They endeavored to compass his death; and when, in spite of their threats, the court which they had instituted to condemn him pronounced him innocent, they slew him in the temple and then hurled him down the precipice. It is a strange anachronism to make Jesus mention this murder; but in other respects it was a fine conception to lay upon his lips this profoundly touching expression of disappointment at Israel's impenitence.

The following picture was drawn with a similar intention: Early in the morning, as Jesus was going to the city from Bethany with his friends, he felt hungry; and seeing a fig-tree

¹ See p. 252, and compare Luke xi. 49.

² See vol. ii. p. 175.

at some little distance, in full leaf, he went up to it to pluck some fruit, but found that there were only leaves upon it. "May never man eat fruit of you again!" he cried, and the tree immediately withered, upon which the disciples said in amazement: "See how the fig-tree has shrivelled up in an instant!"

We can hardly read this little story as it stands without a shock; not so much because of its gross impossibility as because this curse is so utterly unworthy of Jesus. The first two Gospels, taking the story literally, have doubtless failed to reproduce it faithfully. Mark, who spreads it over two days and makes the unfortunate remark that it was not time for figs yet, is especially far out. But it is easy to rediscover the true meaning. For in the third Gospel, which does not give this story, we have already heard Jesus speaking of Israel as the unfruitful fig-tree.¹ And here again the fig-tree is Israel, and the emphasis falls upon the disappointment of Jesus. It was not without reason that he had formed such lofty expectations, for the tree was covered with luxuriant foliage. Israel seemed so zealous for the service and the honor of its God, so fervid in its longing for the Messianic blessedness! Alas! it was but an empty show. The substance, the fruit which it promised and which it ought to bear, was nowhere to be found. The consequences could not be averted. Israel had smitten itself for ever with absolute spiritual barrenness.

This image, then, as a description of the final issue, is quite in its place at this period of the ministry of Jesus, and accurately represents the fact. The sublime attempt of Jesus had failed. The masses of the people lent him a ready ear;² but their shallow attachment was worth nothing, for it did not win them to the kingdom. Meanwhile his position grew more critical from day to day, and the storm was rapidly approaching. Must not a deep melancholy have settled on him, even when among his friends, as he thought of the judgment his people was bringing down upon itself? Doubtless the sigh which Luke³ would have us think escaped him at the very moment of his triumphal entry did indeed rise more than once a week or two later, as he crossed the western slope of the Mount of Olives with the Twelve and saw the city stretched before him. Well might he weep for her and cry, "Oh if thou didst but know, now that the rescuing hand is

¹ See p. 349.

² Mark xii. 37.

³ Luke xix. 41-44; see also p. 357.

extended to thee ! if thou didst but know what truly makes for thy salvation ! But alas ! thine eyes are blind ! ” Well might he breathe his dark forebodings to his friends, though not precisely in the form which Luke has borrowed from the history of the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. “ The days shall surely come when thine enemies shall cast up a mound against thee, and surround thee and hem thee in upon every side, and destroy both thee and thy children within thee, and leave no stone standing upon another, because thou hast brought to nought God’s last attempt to save thee ! ”

We also find in all three Gospels an elaborate prediction which Jesus is represented as making to the Twelve or to four of them, and in which the heaviest sufferings are foretold to Israel. Luke, who gives two of these discourses, goes so far in the second of them as expressly to describe the siege and capture of the City of the Temple, which is another instance of history in the form of prophecy. But even in its earlier shape the discourse can hardly be from Jesus. It describes the end of the present world with all the fearful events which will precede it, the return of Jesus from heaven with terrific signs in the sky, and the great Messianic judgment. Its different parts are not only disconnected, but contradictory. For instance, we are told on the one hand that the return of the Son of Man, and the establishment of the kingdom of God, will most assuredly take place before the generation of the contemporaries of Jesus has passed away ; and, on the other hand, that these events must not be looked for too soon ; that the gospel must first be preached to every nation throughout the world, and that no one, not even the Son of Man, has any knowledge when they will come to pass. Moreover, the discourse displays an unmistakable resemblance to the various productions of that peculiar branch of Jewish literature represented in the Bible by Daniel and Revelation, and outside the canon by various other writings ;¹ and, finally, it appears on careful inspection that the original author, while acquainted with the events that immediately preceded the fall of the Jewish people, had no knowledge of the fall itself. Much the same may be said of the book of Revelation. All this makes it tolerably certain that the discourse we are dealing with consists of loose fragments of a more extensive work written a year or two before the destruction of Jerusalem, in view of the circumstances of the time, to en-

¹ Compare vol. ii. pp. 562 ff.; and pp. 289, 331 ff.

courage the Christians with the assurance that the end of the world and the return of Jesus were close at hand. This is the work to which we have already referred, as the probable source from which the lamentation over Jerusalem's impenitence was drawn.¹

If we take the discourse as it stands, we cannot admit that any part of it was really uttered by Jesus, except certain opening words that form a kind of exordium, and perhaps a single metaphor at the close. These presumably genuine sayings we will therefore give. One day, immediately before the Passover we are told, Jesus left the temple and the city, followed the winding path this side the Kidron, and ascended the Mount of Olives on the other. Here one of the Twelve came up to him, and spoke in a strain of enthusiastic admiration of the dazzling splendor, the colossal proportions, and the immovable foundations of the temple. "Are you lost in admiration of it all?" he answered. "I tell you truly there shall not be one stone left upon another; but all shall be overthrown!" He meant that however warmly the heart of every true Israelite might beat for the sanctuary of his people, yet there would be no place for it in the kingdom of God: it would vanish without a trace when all things were made new in the immediate future. Jesus pursued his way, and a few minutes brought him to the summit of the Mount of Olives, where he sat down. There lay the city at his feet, bathed in the gold and purple of the setting sun. Again his friends drew near, according to Mark the two pairs of brothers only; Simon and Andrew, James and John. "Tell us when this shall come to pass," they said, "and what will be the signs of the approaching end of this world." Jesus may have answered by a stirring exhortation to unwearied toil, since neither they nor any man could know when the last day would break. "Who is the faithful and discreet steward," he continued, "whom his master has set over all his fellow-servants to give each his food at the proper season? Happy the servant whom his master, when he comes, shall find performing this task that he has set him. I tell you, truly, that he will give him charge of all his possessions. But if the wicked servant says to himself: 'My master is long absent,' and begins to beat his fellow-slaves, while he himself feasts and carouses with the drunkards, his master shall return on a day when he looks not for him and at an hour that he does not know, and shall cut him to pieces and rank him among the faithless."

¹ See p. 398.

In connection with this warning, Luke makes Jesus say :¹ “The slave that knew his master’s will, and yet got nothing ready and did not do his will, shall be beaten with many stripes ; but the slave that transgressed his will without knowing it shall be beaten with but few stripes. From him to whom much has been given much will be required ; and from him to whom much was entrusted more will be demanded.” Or again, with an analogous metaphor :² “Let your loins be ever girt and your lamps burning ; and hold yourselves like men that wait for their master to return from the wedding, ready to open the door to him whenever he comes and knocks. Happy are the servants whom their master comes and still finds watching ! I tell you truly, he will gird up his own loins, and make them lie down and will wait upon them ; and if it is the second or the third watch of the night when he comes, and if he finds them still at their post, blessed are they ! For, if the householder had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered him to break into his house. Be you ready likewise ! For the Son of Man will come at an hour when least you look for him.”

How much or how little of all this should be ascribed to Jesus himself it is impossible to determine. The saying, “Let your loins be ever girt and your lamps burning,” — that is to say, “Be ever watchful and alert,” — bears every mark of authenticity. In the first Gospel it is elaborated into the following parable : —

Once there was a wedding ; and in the evening ten of the bride’s companions went out from their houses, in festive attire and with brightly burning lamps in their hands, to meet the bridegroom. He would come, with his companions, by torchlight and with music ; and the girls went out some way to meet him, and to escort him with due ceremony to the house of the bride, where all would join in the brilliant festival. Now five of the girls remembered that there might be a long time to wait, so they filled their flasks with oil and took them with them ; but the other five were so foolish as never to think about it. Now it so happened that the bridegroom and his train were long in coming ; and as they waited, hour after hour, all the ten bridesmaids grew drowsy and dropped asleep. It was not till midnight that they were roused. In the distance they heard a choral song sung in alternate verses, “The bridegroom comes ! The bridegroom comes !

¹ Luke xii. 47, 48.

² Luke xii. 35-40.

Arise, and go to meet him!" As the sound came nearer and nearer, the girls sprang up and began to trim their lamps, which were still just smoking and flickering. The five prudent ones soon trimmed their lamps and saw them burning with a clear, bright flame once more; but their companions were half distracted, for they could not for shame join the bridal procession without their lights. "Give us some of your oil," they cried in despair to the others, "for our lamps are going out!" But this was impossible, for none of them had brought any more than they required for themselves; so the others answered, "There would not be enough for all of us. Run back to the first shop that you can find and buy some for yourselves." The foolish girls now saw that there was not a moment to be lost, and hurried off as their friends had advised them. But meanwhile the bridegroom and his escort came, and the five prudent maidens who were ready joined him, and were soon at the bridal house. They entered, and the door was shut. It was not long before the others came — too late. Their lamps burned clear, and they knocked at the door and cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But he answered, "I know not who you are." "Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

This story teaches the beautiful and universal lesson that fitful energy in a good cause and the best of momentary intentions do not suffice to bring us to our goal; and that, if we are to hold our own in the press of life around us, we must gather up a treasure of faith and knowledge, and possess a fund of moral and religious life within ourselves from which as it were we can refresh at any moment our flagging earnestness and love, and renew our self-consecration to the ideal life. But, as we have it, the parable points with unmistakable distinctness to the circumstances of the apostolical community, when the return of Jesus was delayed beyond all expectation, so that the dangers of worldliness became more and more threatening, and the most earnest warnings were needed against them.¹ The parable accordingly cannot be from Jesus. The bridegroom is no other than the Christ, who will come after long delay to his bride, — the community on the earth. So too in the conception of the Evangelist,² but not of course in the mouth of Jesus himself,³ the master who goes abroad in the parable of the talents (which follows directly after that of the ten virgins) is the Christ who has left the

¹ See, for instance, Romans xiii. 11 ff.

² See pp. 389, 390.

² Compare p. 358.

earth for heaven, to return after a while. Finally Matthew, who gives these pictures of the future in far greater fulness than the other Evangelists, concludes them with a description of the last judgment, which we have taken an earlier opportunity of giving.¹

It was but natural that during the gloom of these last remaining days the thoughts of Jesus, when among his friends, should have constantly wandered into the future and dwelt upon the judgment hanging over his nation, and the establishment of the kingdom of God after the short delay caused by Israel's hardness of heart. And it is equally natural that his warnings and his glances into the future should have been gradually transformed and elaborated as they passed from mouth to mouth. But, however much uncertainty this latter consideration may cause, one thing at least appears to rise above all reasonable doubt; namely, that, in spite of the gloomiest forebodings as to the fate of the great majority of his people, Jesus never for a moment lost faith in his own mission or the speedy triumph of his cause,—never ceased to expect the speedy coming of the kingdom of heaven, in which all mere external worship would be done away, and the crushing yoke of the letter would be broken.²

Meanwhile he saw the crisis of his own fate drawing near with rapid strides. The first Gospel represents him, after giving expression to his expectations and uttering his threats in the series of discourses and parables just considered, as saying to his friends, "You know that in two days the Passover begins, and the Son of Man is given up to death,"—or rather, as the words now stand, "to be crucified." If Jesus really said this, he did not mean to predict the exact moment of his death, but to emphasize the mournful contrast between the joyous festival to which all Israel looked forward and the bitter death that awaited him.

The evening of that same day, or the one that followed, showed how completely he was filled with thoughts of death. His host, Simon, had arranged a social meal in his honor, and, before it was over, a woman entered with an alabaster flask full of the costliest ointment in her hand. She stood behind Jesus, snapped the long, thin neck of the vase, and poured the contents over his head, filling the chamber with the glorious perfume. Her meaning was not doubtful. In the presence of the Twelve and all the other guests she

¹ See pp. 167, 168.

² Compare Acts vi. 14.

anointed Jesus king of Israel! It was an act of homage rendered in the enthusiasm of her faith to the future Messiah, as if to compensate for the delay in his recognition by the people; but at the same time it was an appeal to him no longer to defer the public assumption of his office. Little did the impatient disciple perceive how matters really stood! We may well believe that however acceptable to Jesus such a tribute of honor at such a moment must have been, yet a shadow crossed his face as he thought how widely different his fate would really be!

Meanwhile the woman's deed was far from meeting with the approval of the disciples. Were they angry with her for seeking thus to anticipate them and all the others? Or did they think she ought to have rendered this solemn homage publicly in Jerusalem in the presence of all the people, instead of at this quiet, friendly meeting? At any rate, they were decidedly put out, and some one muttered half aloud, "What waste! The ointment might have been sold for as much as three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor!" and instead of the instantaneous and passionate assent she had expected her action to awake, the woman only met with sullen or resentful glances. As soon as Jesus noticed this he began to defend her. "Why do you treat the woman thus? She has done a good deed to me. For you always have the poor with you, and can do good to them whenever you will; but you will not always have me with you. She has done what she could. In pouring this ointment on my body she has anointed me already for my burial."

The importance which the early Christians attached to this scene at the close of the Master's life appears from the words that are put into his mouth: "I tell you truly that wherever this Gospel [that is to say, the history of his life, or the writing itself that embodied it], — wherever this Gospel shall be preached in all the world, this woman's noble deed shall be recorded in her praise." She deserves no less, for her deed brought comfort to Jesus in an hour of deepest suffering, and we may well be surprised that her name has perished.

As for us, we rejoice to find in the Master's condemnation of the judgment and behavior of the disciples a vigorous protest against that narrow, matter-of-fact conception of life, — too common still, — which always looks to the immediate utility of every thing as the first or only test of its value, and condemns as sinful and wretched all those sweet super-

fluties and adornments of which, thank God! our earth and our life upon it are so full. Not only the useful, but the beautiful as well, and all the utterances of a beautiful soul, have a right of existence on their own account.

From a historical point of view the story is valuable as illustrating the tone of feeling among the disciples: while some of them longed impatiently for their Master to proceed to action, they were all of them more or less completely blind to what was immediately before them. But we are most impressed by the deep feeling of the words of Jesus, "She has embalmed my body for the grave." The perfume of the ointment called up the reflection, "Corpses are anointed so!" and the next moment Jesus thought with a shudder, "Soon I shall be a corpse myself." Under the influence of this idea he gave the gloomy interpretation we have seen to the woman's act. Of course he perfectly understood what she meant by it; but he could only accept it as a tribute to the dead,—as the last honor shown to a venerated Master by the lavish hand of fervent love. Before long there would be nothing they could do for him. "You will not always have me with you."

His forebodings were not false!



CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LAST EVENING.

MARK XIV. 10-25.¹

IT was Thursday, the fourteenth of Nisan. At six o'clock in the evening the celebration of the Passover would begin. Jesus had looked forward in eager suspense to this day and this hour. Would he live to see it? While every other family or band of friends was celebrating the joyful festival of Israel's great deliverance, would he too, with the Twelve, join in the commemorative meal in the City of the Lord? He longed for it with all his heart, but did not conceal from himself that it was far from certain. Meanwhile he had made the necessary arrangements, that all might at least be in readiness. On such an evening Jerusalem was so

¹ Matthew xxvi. 14-29; Luke xxii. 3-30.

crowded that every available place was pressed into service, and it was absolutely necessary to bespeak a room at any rate some days beforehand. To do this safely, Jesus must select a friend upon whose fidelity and secrecy he could absolutely rely; and to prevent any chance of his arrangements becoming known he did not even tell the Twelve what he had done.

In the morning, therefore, they came to him at Bethany and asked him where he wished them to prepare the Passover, in order that they might make the necessary purchases and get every thing ready. They must buy a lamb, and slaughter and cook it; and must provide the wine and unleavened bread, with a dish of bitter herbs (lettuce, endive, parsley, cress, and radishes) and a mess of dried dates, almonds, grapes, nuts, and figs prepared with vinegar and cinnamon. Some of these viands were intended to remind the consumers of the slavery in Egypt, while others had some long-forgotten symbolical meaning in connection with the primitive significance of the feast.¹ Of course the disciples would get every thing ready; but the great question was where they were to meet.

In answer to their inquiries on this point, Jesus commissioned two of the disciples — perhaps Peter and John — to go to the city to a certain man and say, “The Master says, ‘The hour of my death draws near. I will keep the Passover with my disciples in your house.’” Such is the account in Matthew; but the message is rather strange and incoherent, and Mark and Luke give it thus: “The Master says, ‘Where is the room in which I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?’ Then,” continues Jesus, “he will show you a large room upstairs, with a table and couches and all that is needful. Make ready for us there.” The same Evangelists, however, introduce the message in the following legendary form: “Go to the city, and at the gate a man will meet you with a jug of water on his shoulder; follow him, and whatever house he enters, say to the householder, ‘The Master,’” and so on. This cannot refer to a preconcerted token, which would be unnecessary, since Peter and John must surely have been definitely told to whom they were to go; and if a token had been needed at all this would have been a very bad one, for on the morning of such a busy day water-carriers would be passing to and fro in every direction. Obviously, the Evangelists mean that Jesus had supernatural

¹ See vol. i. pp. 278 ff.

knowledge who would meet the disciples at the precise moment of their entry. We need therefore pay no further attention to this portion of the story; for the fact appears to be simply that tradition has not preserved the name of the householder. And this is also indicated from the impersonal form of expression used by the first Evangelist in speaking of him.

We suspect that Jesus had special reasons for even greater caution than usual. There was a member of the inner circle of his friends in whose bearing there had been a change during the last few days. His fellow-disciples had not noticed it, and perhaps were incapable of doing so; but the quick eye of the Master had detected it, and it had been a painful surprise and a source of growing uneasiness to him. The disciple in question was Judas of Karioth. For some time past his zeal had been cooling, and a certain reserved and uneasy air of hesitation had deepened during the last few hours into a restless and perturbed deportment, which he sought in vain to hide by a show of greater love and intimacy, and which gave the Master only too good cause for anxiety. Perhaps he had warned him indirectly before, or had taken him aside to speak with him; but now he watched him with a mournful narrowness of observation that nothing could escape, and before evening he felt almost sure that his enemies had a tool in the inner circle of his friends!

And, in truth, the evening or day before Judas had withdrawn in secret from Bethany and gone to Jerusalem to secure an audience from the ecclesiastical authorities, by the instrumentality of the officers of the temple-guard, or by any other means that he could find. When a private interview was granted him, he told the high priests that he was one of the twelve chosen disciples of the Nazarene, and was ready to help them in getting this dangerous leader into their power. It need hardly be said that they greedily caught at his invaluable offer of help; that they showered praises on the new ally who had come of his own accord from so unexpected a quarter, and confirmed him in the intention which they represented as so highly meritorious and acceptable to God. It was only the day before that they had determined to wait a week before doing any thing, but now they might hasten the execution of their schemes without prejudice to the cautious policy they had then adopted; for if they could seize him and carry out their further plans at once without any danger of tumult, it would be much better than leaving him at liberty

all through the feast ; for it was impossible to tell whether he might not cause disturbances in the very week of Passover itself.

So the plan was soon concerted. Judas was to watch for the very earliest opportunity of putting Jesus into the power of the magistrates, and they on their side were to reward his faithful zeal for the honor and service of the Lord by giving him a sum of money.

A traitor among the friends of Jesus ! How can we help pausing for a moment and exclaiming, Is it possible ?

Our authorities leave us without guidance. The account, which we have ventured to expand a little, is characterized in the original by pathetic brevity : “ And Judas Iskariot, one of the Twelve, went to the high priests to betray him to them. And when they heard it they were glad, and promised to give him money ; and he sought how best he might put him into their hands.” Not an attempt at explanation. And yet what a terrible enigma !

Luke adds that Satan entered the heart of Judas ; but no one can call that an explanation. Matthew makes him go to the authorities and say, “ What will you give me to put him into your hands ? ” upon which they weigh out, or pay him, thirty shekels of silver (something under £4). But it is extremely improbable that Judas was moved by simple love of gain, and opened the conference by attempting to strike his bargain at once ; and the paltry sum of thirty shekels, the traditional average price of a slave,¹ is borrowed from the prophet Zechariah, when speaking of the miserable wages offered by the people to their shepherd.² We are, therefore, left entirely to our own conjectures.

Every attempt to solve the mystery must start from these two facts : Firstly, that Judas, like the Eleven, had joined the Master because he was genuinely moved by him, and had been selected by him, as one of the best and most promising of his disciples, to be admitted and trained in the inner circle of daily intercourse with him. He, too, had left all things for the Master’s sake, — had been true to him through all vicissitudes ; had probably been sent out by him to preach ;³ had reverenced him as the Messiah that was to be ; and had seen a glorious future opened through him to himself and his

¹ Exodus xxi. 32.

² Zechariah xi. 12, 13 ; see vol. ii. pp. 238, 239 ; and Matthew xxvii. 7-10.

³ See pp. 181, 182.

fellow-disciples. And, secondly, he was thoroughly imbued, in common again with his fellow-disciples, with the worldly expectations of his people; and therefore the Master's constant predictions of suffering so far as he took them in, and the failure of his decisive efforts at Jerusalem which became clearer and clearer each day, were a bitter disappointment — nay, a grievance, an enigma, an offence — to him.

It seems highly probable, therefore, that he took his fatal step because he considered that he had been grossly deceived in Jesus. The event, he thought, had shown that Jesus was not the Messiah he had given himself out to be. And with his Master's promises all his own prospects had vanished in smoke. And what was he to think of Jesus himself after all these futile pretensions? Perhaps the distinctness with which the Master had announced his death as close at hand, at that supper at Bethany,¹ gave Judas the last impulse. But why *he* especially deserted his Master and even went over to his enemies, while all the rest were faithful, it is impossible to say. One might perhaps suppose that, as a Judæan, he was more susceptible of the influence and amenable to the authority of the priests than his Galilæan fellow-disciples were; and that when once he was thrown out of harmony with Jesus his reverence for the high priests reasserted itself, and induced him to look upon his Master as a false prophet whom it was his duty to hand over to the authorities. As regards the factor contributed by his own individual character, we may perhaps assume that he was of a phlegmatic and eminently practical disposition, and that his "plain common sense" made him feel less enthusiasm for the Master than the others did; made him realize more fully the unfavorable turn that things had taken, and determine — after long hesitation and long deliberation perhaps — to change sides before the worst should come! Finally, despair of finding a better solution has sometimes suggested the groundless supposition, intended to lighten the guilt and explain the conduct of the traitor, that a main or subsidiary motive, or at any rate a palliative to his own conscience, was the idea that by putting an end to the Master's indecision and procrastination, and by forcing on the crisis, he would really lay him under an obligation should he turn out in truth to be the Messiah or monarch; for by precipitating the collision with the authorities, he would compel him to declare himself openly, to set a great popular movement on foot at the Passover, to ascend the throne, and establish the kingdom of God.

¹ See pp. 406, 407.

That any one can seriously put forward such a conjecture as this is the best proof of our helpless ignorance.

The two disciples had fulfilled their task. They had found every thing ready in the house of the unnamed friend, and had made the necessary provisions, including the preparation of the lamb which was to be the principal dish.¹ About two o'clock in the afternoon the trumpets of the Levites gave the signal, and the Jews, bearing the lambs on their shoulders, approached the court of the temple, which was adorned with varied tapestries for the occasion. Then, between the hours of three and five, the people themselves slaughtered the lambs, which had previously been examined by the priests, while the trumpets sounded and the choirs sang, and the priests, in two long rows, received the blood in gold and silver vessels, passed it on from one to the other, and poured it out at the foot of the altar. Then the animals were skinned,—still in the temple,—their kidneys, fat, and liver left before the altar, and the rest wrapped up in the fleece and carried home to be roasted ready for the feast to begin after sunset. We can fancy what a bustling scene the mount of the temple would present! Josephus tells us that in the year 66 A.D. no less than 256,500 lambs were slaughtered; and even if we allow for great exaggeration, and assume, say, a fifth of that number as the average, still the slaughter and preparation of the animals would cause an indescribable commotion.

In the evening Jesus came with his disciples and approached the house where the cheerfully-lighted hall awaited him. There they took off their sandals, washed their hands and feet, and lay down on the couches. The course of the festivities prescribed by tradition was something as follows: First of all a goblet was filled, generally with three parts of wine to one of water, and was passed round after the head of the family had uttered a short thanksgiving both for the wine ("Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! thou king of the earth who hast made the fruit of the vine!") and for the feast day. After this the partakers divided the bitter herbs and ate some of them. Then they served the biscuit of unleavened bread baked in flat, round cakes about half an inch thick, together with the mess of fruit and the roasted flesh of the Paschal lamb. The head of the family took one of the biscuit, broke it up with the blessing, "Praised be He who makes the bread come forth out of the earth!" and handed the pieces

¹ See vol. i. pp. 277, 278.

to those present, who ate them together with some of the herbs dippe:l in the fruit. While the second cup of wine was being prepared, the significance of the feast was expounded, and Psalms cxiii. and cxiv. (the beginning of the Hallel) were sung,¹ after which the cup went round. Then the head of the family washed his hands again and ate the first piece of the lamb, as he would presently eat the last; upon which the regular meal began, and was passed in cheerful conversation, all eating to satiety. The meal was closed with a third cup of wine, called the cup “of the blessing;” and, as a fourth cup went round, the remainder of the song of praise (Psalms cxv.-cxviii.) was sung, and the feast concluded. A fifth cup however was not prohibited. We may suppose that these regulations were in the main observed in that upper chamber to which we have transported ourselves in imagination, and where Jesus took the place of the head of the family.

But in one respect this circle of friends formed a sad exception to the general rule. The Paschal supper was pre-eminently a time of rejoicing. But here there was a cloud upon the feast. The first words that Jesus uttered as he reclined upon the couch, though they testified to a certain sense of joy, had yet a mournful ring: “ How have I longed to eat this Passover with you [before I suffer], for I shall not eat it again till it be the true feast of redemption in the kingdom of God.” But it was not only the thought of the approaching severance that weighed upon his heart,—it was far more the sense of distrust which he had never felt before when in the midst of his friends.

And when all the symbolical ceremonies that introduced the feast were over, it must have become more obvious than ever that Jesus was under some painful restraint. He could not go on with the meal; and the dark suspicion that he cherished forced him at last to give it utterance. A deep sigh broke the strained and painful silence, and he cried: “ I tell you, one of *you* here at table with me is about to give me up into the hands of my enemies ! ” Is it possible that he hoped to arrive at greater certainty, to hold back the disciple who was in such fearful peril, and to draw a frank and penitent confession from him? If so, he was disappointed. The friends were bewildered. They could not understand it, save one. They knew that such a deed would be utterly impossible to them; and not in the least for their own satisfaction.

¹ See vol. i. p. 280.

but simply to clear themselves from each other's suspicions, they began, first one and then another, to ask, "It is not I?" "Master, it is not I?" But Jesus had no intention of saying more. The warning would be understood by him whom it concerned. So he only emphasized the blackness of the deed: "It is one of you twelve who are here dipping your bread in one dish with me! The Son of Man must indeed go, as it is written of him; but woe to him by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It were well for that man had he never been born."

Here the first Gospel adds that Judas asked again, "Rabbi, is it I?" and that Jesus answered that it was. But this is incredible. If the Eleven had known that Judas was the traitor, they would not have quietly allowed him to go his way. It is far more probable that even the account we have already taken from the Gospels represents Jesus as having spoken more definitely than he really did. If he did not announce a fact, but spoke of an urgent danger, as a solemn warning against desertion, the disciples may well have regarded it at the time as another instance of his gloomy forebodings, while they afterwards involuntarily threw it into a more definite form.

Be this as it may, it was some relief to Jesus to have given utterance to what oppressed him. The meal went on, though with little sign of festive joy. After a time they spoke of other things, of which however we have lost all record. Luke indeed indicates several subjects as spoken of at this last meeting; but much of what he gives us on this occasion finds its true place elsewhere. Such for instance is an exhortation to ministering love, rising from a dispute about precedence,¹ and concluded with a reference to the example of Jesus himself: "Who is greater, the guest or the servant? Surely the guest. And yet I am among you as a servant!" We can more readily believe that Jesus cast a retrospective glance upon all that they had gone through together, commended their unshaken fidelity, and expressly named them his successors now that he was on the point of leaving them: "You are the men who have clung to me in all my trials, and to you do I commit the kingdom as my Father has committed it to me." But some suspicion is thrown even upon this saying by the words that follow it.² Luke also represents certain words as uttered at table which we shall follow Matthew and

¹ Luke xxii. 24-27. See p. 352.

² Luke xxii. 28-30. See p. 346.

Mark in placing later, — after Jesus and his disciples had left the hall.

So the meal was ended. Jesus himself was completely dominated by the thought that a fatal termination of the struggle was close at hand ; but he had again perceived how far he was from having really imparted his conception of the future to his friends. Their preconceived ideas so blinded them to the true state of things, that in spite of his repeated warnings they were still unprepared for the catastrophe. It was therefore for their sakes as well as because he felt impelled himself to give words, and if possible some yet more emphatic utterance, to the dark forebodings as well as the unshaken hopes which filled him, that he obeyed the inspiration of a sudden thought, and performed a simple action which produced so deep an impression on his friends as to lead to most remarkable results. He raised his head, and there was something in his face which riveted the attention of his disciples. They followed him with their eyes as he took two cakes of bread, laid them before him, uttered the customary blessing, and broke one of them into thirteen pieces, one of which he ate, and placed the rest upon the other cake, which served as a plate, and passed it to his friends with the words, “ Eat it. It is my body.” Then he filled the cup to the brim, set it on the table, and, after the usual thanksgiving, raised it to his lips and then passed it round saying, as they all drank from it : “ This is my blood of the covenant, that shall flow for the salvation of many. Of a truth I tell you that I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine till the great day when I shall drink it new in the perfected kingdom of God ! ”

No one present could fail for a moment to comprehend his meaning. It was a symbolical action, after the manner of the prophets. We have more than once seen Jeremiah, for example, adopt a like method of enforcing his words by accompanying them with some visible illustration.¹ “ Even as I break this bread,” Jesus meant to say, “ so shall my body be broken and slain ; even as this wine flows out so shall my blood flow. Nay, my death is so near at hand that I shall never drink wine again, shall never more lie down to meat, in this world.” It is possible, however, that he spoke, as Matthew says, of *this* wine, — that is to say, the wine of the Passover, — and only meant that as this was the first so it was also the last Passover which he would live to celebrate

¹ See vol. ii. pp. 374, 366, 367, *et seq.*

with his friends. In any case, he uttered his firm conviction that he would rise again,—that he would be reunited to his disciples, and in the immediate future, when heaven and earth were made new, would taste the joy of the kingdom of God here upon this earth.

Yet more. It was not enough for his friends to believe that salvation would come in spite of his fall,—they must know that his death was the very means by which it would be secured: his blood that would so soon be shed was the “blood of the covenant.” We must remember in this connection that in ancient times a sacrifice was always made at the conclusion of a treaty. In the blood that was shed lay the real significance of the ceremony. The Israelites regarded blood as pre-eminently sacred, for they believed it to be the seat and principle of life, or the very life itself,—so that when the blood of the victim was sprinkled upon the two parties to a treaty they were brought into the very closest connection with each other as sharers in one life, pledged to inviolable fidelity.¹ Now, tradition declared that when Moses sealed the covenant between Yahweh and Israel upon Mount Sinai, he had said as he sprinkled the blood, “This is the blood of the covenant”—that is to say, the blood by which the covenant is established.² It was to this that Jesus now referred as he adopted the expression. That covenant had never been carried out, for one of the parties to it had proved faithless; and therefore the promise of the Lord had not been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God had not come. But what Moses had intended, he, Jesus, was to accomplish; and that, too, at the moment of his death. As his blood flowed out, *the covenant* would be established,—the true and eternal covenant which had failed before, the covenant between God and man, between the Father and his children, the covenant of love, of life, of blessedness. Well might he say that his blood would flow for the salvation of many! And when his death had brought to pass what his life had failed to accomplish,—when ere long all things were glorified,—he relied upon returning and sharing with his dear ones the extreme of bliss.

This is the simplest account of what took place, and is given by Mark. The first Gospel agrees with it, except that it makes Jesus say that his blood of the covenant was shed for many “for the forgiveness of sins.” But this idea that

¹ Compare 1 Peter i. 2.

² See vol. ii. p. 266; Exodus xxiv. 6-8; Hebrews ix. 18 ff.

his death would be an atoning sacrifice, as well as a sacrifice of the covenant, is entirely foreign to the context; for Jesus simply declares that his sublime mission of establishing the covenant or the kingdom of God would be fulfilled at the very moment when his enemies imagined they were crushing him, and that he would triumph in his fall. We possess yet another account of this symbolical action, however, from the pen of an earlier authority than our Evangelists; for Paul mentions it in the first "Epistle to the Corinthians,"¹ and the version given by Luke agrees with his. This account differs from the other in several points of minor importance. For instance, Luke at any rate makes Jesus drink no more wine even at that same supper,—so that he literally tasted wine for the last time when he uttered the memorable words; both Luke and Paul imply that a considerable interval, if not the whole meal-time, elapsed between the breaking and distribution of the bread,—as a symbol of his body that would be given up for men,—and the passing round of the cup "of the blessing,"² which pointed to the covenant established by the pouring out of his blood; and, more in the spirit of Paul than that of Jesus, they both make the Master speak—not of the covenant, the only one that ever was or is, but—of the *new* covenant in contrast with the old covenant of Moses.³ But the really important peculiarity of their version is that they make Jesus say, as he gives his disciples the bread, "Do this in remembrance of me;" and again, as he passes the cup, "Do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me." This points to an express institution initiated by Jesus, of which there is not a hint in Matthew or Mark.

An institution! — but not, as is often supposed, the institution of the "Lord's Supper." If these words are genuine,—and we cannot definitely say that they are not,—they probably convey no more than a simple request on the part of Jesus that when his friends met together at meals they would think of him, of this last meeting, and of his death. Hence arose the custom, not only among the Twelve but among all the believers, of celebrating "the meal of the Lord,"⁴ in commemoration of his death, whenever the community assembled. We need not do more than indicate in a single word how this solemnity gradually degenerated in the Christian Church, under the influence of growing superstition, until the words "This is my body" were taken literally,—till the

¹ Corinthians xi. 20 ff.; compare x. 16 ff.
² Compare vol. ii. p. 385.

³ 1 Corinthians x. 16.
⁴ 1 Corinthians xi. 20.

bread, or “wafer,” and the wine were supposed to change, under the blessing of the priest, into the veritable body and blood of Christ; till the sacrifice of the “mass” had assumed its full proportions as the bloodless repetition of Christ’s atoning death.

It is at least equally probable, however, that Jesus did not really use these words at all. In that case, the deep impression which his symbolical action had made upon his disciples that evening was itself enough to establish the usage among them of thinking more especially of his death as they broke the bread and passed round the cup at their brotherly meetings; and then this usage, which they felt to be completely in his spirit, reacted upon the history till the words “Do this in remembrance of me” were put into the mouth of Jesus himself. For we must remember that Paul himself was not present; and though he is the earliest witness we have, yet even his account dates from twenty years after the event itself. The stream of tradition from which he drew may therefore have been troubled already.

So much is certain, that the impression was indelible. It was the farewell meal of Jesus with his friends; and when the event had brought home this fact to them, how vividly his image must have risen up before them as he reclined at meat with them, and visibly presented his death before their eyes!¹

And all Christendom, not wishing to fall short of the disciples and first confessors in rendering the tribute of reverence to Jesus, has rightly held the memory of that last gathering sacred,—has kept that evening, and the image of that noble Friend and Brother, who stands prepared to offer himself up for the world, in imperishable honor!

¹ See Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GETHSEMANE.

MATTHEW XXVI. 30-56.¹

AND now, as usage required, the festive meal was ended (before midnight) by the chanting of the second part of the Hallel, during which all stood up; and then the party left the hospitable roof. They followed the usual road out of the city, across the Kidron and up the Mount of Olives. In the street Judas succeeded in stealing away unmarked, unless, as is hardly probable, he had found some earlier opportunity of quietly withdrawing. As soon as Jesus missed him, he suspected that he had gone to put his unhallowed scheme into execution. Should he take to flight? It would only avail him for a moment, if at all; and besides he was already committed to stand his ground. The attempt to escape would now be unworthy of him, and the voice within forbade it. But, on the other hand, he must instantly prepare his followers for the worst. "When I sent you out," he said, "with neither purse nor wallet nor sandals, did you want for any thing?"² "Nothing," they replied at once. "But now," he said, "whoever has a purse or wallet let him take it; and whoever has none let him sell his very coat and get a sword. For I tell you that that text — 'He was reckoned among the transgressors'³ — must be now fulfilled in me; for my end is near at hand." "Master, we have two swords," answered the disciples — as if that would have helped them! — and Jesus seeing that they did not understand broke them short abruptly.

We can by no means vouch for every word of this conversation, least of all for the citation from the Second Isaiah; but in the main it seems to be authentic. It is only given in Luke. The other two Gospels, in their turn, put the following prediction upon the Master's lips: "You will all disown me this night, for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered;'⁴ but when I have risen again I will go before you into Galilee." Whereupon

¹ Mark xiv. 26-52; Luke xxii. 31-53.³ Isaiah liii. 12.² See pp. 182-184.⁴ Zechariah xiii. 7.

Peter answers: "Though every one should disown you, I never will!" Alas! his very confidence would make him first to fail! "This very night," said Jesus, "before cock-crow, you will deny three times that you know me!" "Though I must die with you, yet will I never deny you!" cried the disciple; and all the others joined in his protestation of invincible fidelity. Then Jesus seeing how little Peter and the others knew themselves, and how they threw to the winds his exhortation to redoubled vigilance, urged it no more. According to the third Gospel, he clothed his warning in the following words: "Simon, Simon! Satan has demanded you all [as he once demanded Job from God], to winnow you like wheat [and make you desert me]. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And do you, when once you have come to repentance, strengthen your brothers!" Upon which the other answered: "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"

Unquestionably there is truth at the foundation of this narrative, but we cannot accept it as it stands. Jesus, we may well believe, expressed his fear that when he fell for a time, as he soon must do, his disciples' faith in him would be shaken, and they would even desert him; and he warned Peter more especially, since he was the most impetuous, and therefore the most in danger of them all. But Peter would not take the warning. Jesus probably seized this same opportunity to testify his firm belief in the revival of the disciples' faith, and it is even possible that he advised them to retreat to Galilee. But when the Gospels make him definitely declare that that very night they will all desert him; that Peter will deny that he knows him, not once only, but three times over, before the end of the third night-watch, that is to say before three o'clock in the morning; when Mark, who takes the reference to the hour in a slavishly literal sense, makes him specify that the triple denial will take place "before the cock has crowed twice;" when all three Evangelists make him directly afterwards predict his resurrection quite incidentally, as if it were a matter of course or a thing of no importance,—then we are safe in concluding that the predictions are framed to correspond with the actual, or rather with the supposed, results.

But we do not in the least require these later elaborations to enable us to comprehend all the depth of sadness and anxiety with which the thought of his disciples' weakness must have inspired Jesus at this moment; how far he was from cheating himself by a flattering and shallow confidence that

all would yet go well; and how great that faith in the power of truth and love must have been which enabled him to overcome his fear, to rest assured of the renewed allegiance of his disciples, and know that his toil and conflict and self-sacrifice could not be in vain.

Meanwhile the company had reached the estate of Gethsemane, on their way to Bethany. This place must have belonged to some friend of Jesus, and from its position on the Mount of Olives, and its name, which signifies "oil press," we may conclude that it was an olive-yard provided with the necessary offices. Here Jesus turned aside. Was he seeking a safer refuge than his usual lodging gave him? It hardly seems probable. Did he intend to spend the night there in the open air¹ because it was so late, or because the Law prescribed the custom of remaining in the holy city till the morning after the Paschal meal?² This portion of the western slope of the hill was indeed regarded as within the precincts of Jerusalem,³ but the commandment in question does not seem to have been strictly observed, and Jesus would in no case recognize its binding force.⁴ It is more probable that, in consequence of his conversations with the disciples and the danger which threatened him at every step, he was overcome by violent emotions which he felt he could control no longer, and so withdrew for a few moments to recover his equanimity and self-command before pursuing his way to Bethany. This agrees with the words he addressed to the disciples as he entered the garden: "Sit down here while I go in to pray." The presence of his disciples at the entrance would also serve as a precaution against surprise.

But this time, contrary to his wont, he did not wish to be alone as he prayed. In his terror and oppression of heart he needed the companionship and support of his nearest friends, and he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. In deep dejection he entered the garden with them, and then he could contain himself no longer. He wrung his hands in an agony of sorrow and dismay, and then cried to his disciples with an appeal to their friendship: "My soul is sorrowful, to the very death! Stay here and watch with me." So the three lay down while he went on a few steps further, threw himself not only on his knees, but with his face upon the ground.

¹ Compare Matthew xxvi. 45; Mark xiv. 41.

² Deuteronomy xvi. 7.

⁴ Compare pp. 215, 216.

³ See p. 360.

and prayed. All was as still as death, and the silver rays of the full moon played fantastically with the shadows of the olive-leaves. After a time Jesus found words for his prayer, and above his sobs the three friends heard, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! And yet not my will, but thine be done!"

Is it strange that Jesus, who had seen the threatening storm gathering in the distance and drawing ever nearer, now prayed that he might be spared from suffering and death? Is it strange that he who had looked all danger steadfastly in the face now seemed to lose his courage at the last? Doubtless it was a grievous disappointment to Jesus himself, when he found that the conflict he imagined to be over had returned in all its fierceness, that the terror he had already vanquished was once more too strong for him. Yet in our eyes he would be less great, less lovable, had he gone to meet his fate impassively as a man of steel, suppressing every human feeling without apparent effort. The more keenly he felt his lot and the fiercer the conflict in his own bosom, the greater was his triumph and the higher his claims to our reverence. And who so dull as not to feel that the various events of the evening must have touched him to the quick, while the very midnight hour would heighten his feeling of oppression. Besides, even when he had suspected or foreseen the issue most distinctly, it had always been to some extent uncertain; it had always left a possibility of hope: and in any case it is one thing to see the clouds gathering more or less in the distance, another to know that the bolt may fall at any instant. Had Judas gone for men? Were they drawing near or lying in wait for him even now? Were they approaching him that very moment? He could expect no mercy at the hands of the authorities to whom he seemed so dangerous. He must prepare for the very worst. Snatched away from his work and from his friends in the very flower of his life! And death approached him in its most ghastly shape,—as the death of a malefactor with all its attendant shame and horror. Was this the promise on which he began his work? Was it true, was it inevitable, that he must face this lot? Why could it not be otherwise? All things were possible to God, even the conversion of the bitterest foes of truth into its friends. Why should not He? . . . Oh, if it could, if it might, but be that the kingdom of God should come without this bitter trial! . . . Thus did he wrestle with God in prayer. But if the only escape lay through desertion of his post, he would not

seize it. He would obey God's holy will and not the promptings of his own carnal nature. He would be true to the last to the task and mission of his life. But if it could, if it could !

What he said after the few words we have given, and how long he prayed, we know not. The three disciples who were the only witnesses had nothing to report, for the same emotions that had strained the nerves of Jesus to such insupportable tension had excited his friends to a moment's effort, and had then left them numbed and insensate. When Jesus had already partially regained his self-possession and came to speak to them, he found them sleeping ! Even his truest friends could give him no sympathy, or, at any rate, not even the semblance of support. There was a tone of reproachful disappointment in the question he addressed to them, especially to Peter, who had been so loud in his promises, but now—"Asleep ! Could you not watch a single hour with me ? Be vigilant, and pray to God that you be spared temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

In these last words he uttered his own recent experience ; and if he felt that he himself was weak, what must he not have feared for these well-meaning, but alas ! so feeble, friends ? As for himself, welcome as their support would have been, he no longer complained of its failing him. He found all that he needed in his God. Once more he withdrew and bent down in prayer. "My Father, if this cup cannot pass away without my drinking it, thy will be done !" His friends heard no more, or could not remember more ; but these few words suffice to show how completely he surrendered his own will, how unconditionally he yielded all that God required. When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep again, and when he roused them they were too dazed to exchange a word with him, so completely had their powers collapsed. So he left them, and found his refuge in God. At last he had completely regained his self-command. Then he was ready for the worst ; and when he stood by his disciples once more, it was with the words of forgiving gentleness, "Nay, nay, sleep on, and have your rest!"

Such is the moving scene of the Master's wrestling of soul in Gethsemane ! The apostolic age itself did well in attaching high importance to it as the proof that the great Exemplar and Perfecter, however highly exalted above his brothers,

had yet been like to them in all things, — had felt with them ; had known their temptations, their conflicts, their weakness, and had only learned complete obedience and realized his calling by means of suffering.¹ And let him who knows it not already learn from this scene that there is nothing shameful in shrinking from suffering, if we overcome our dread by faith. Never, perhaps, has a word been spoken upon earth that has unlocked such treasures of consolation and strength in suffering as that prayer of Jesus : “ Thy will be done.”

We need not be surprised that oral tradition soon heightened the coloring of this scene. Luke can already tell us how an angel appeared from heaven to Jesus as he prayed, and strengthened him ; and how he prayed so earnestly in the fierceness of his conflict with himself that the sweat started out like gouts of blood and dropped upon the ground. But the obvious exaggeration of this addition cannot throw any reasonable doubt upon the authenticity of the original account, though even there the details are from the nature of the case uncertain. Matthew, for instance, speaks of three several prayers, which is a round number ; whereas Luke expressly mentions only one, and Mark two. The invincible drowsiness of the only witnesses throws a certain haze of uncertainty over all details.

Two remarks may serve to support the authenticity of the narrative. The prayer of Jesus indicates that to the very last he believed that there was a possibility of the kingdom of God being founded without his falling a sacrifice himself, and was to some extent uncertain as to his own fate. It was just this alternation that caused him such agony of soul when the hope that had grown ever weaker, that he had almost completely suppressed at the Paschal supper, for a moment reasserted itself. Here then the Gospels, which made him announce his fearful end as absolutely certain weeks before, correct themselves. And again, this terrible antecedent conflict gives us the needful explanation of the Master’s mood and bearing during the dread hours that follow. There is a certain proud, immovable loftiness in him ; he suppresses every emotion ; not the most galling insult or the fiercest suffering can draw a sigh, much less a cry of lamentation or of pain, from him, until his strength forsakes him a few moments before his death. This lofty and unshaken self-reliance and reliance upon God, — this strength of will, this might of spirit,

¹ Hebrews ii. 10, 17, iv. 15, v. 2, 7-10.

without which he could not have endured the fierce ordeal,—was the fruit of that hour in the olive-garden.

“Wake up! The time has come! The Son of Man is already betrayed into sinners’ hands! Rise up and let us go! The traitor is here!” Such were the cries with which Jesus roused his friends, and, as they sprang up still only half awake, endeavored to apprise them of the instant danger. He had heard in the distance the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps; then the eight disciples he had left at the entrance rushed in with a terrified alarm upon their lips, while close upon their heels came an armed band of men with Judas at their head. As though he were still a friend, as though he were rejoiced to see his Master again after a few hours’ absence, the traitor ran to him and kissed him twice upon the cheek, with the cry, “Hail, Rabbi!” Or, according to another account, he shouted, “Rabbi! Rabbi!” as if he too would warn him of the danger.

This kiss was a preconcerted signal,—so at least it struck the other disciples, for of course the conspirators themselves never gave any information. When Judas had stolen away from the others he had gone straight to the temple, which was reopened at midnight on this special evening. There he had asked the officer in charge to give him some men to enable him to carry out his promise. The majority of the guards on service were required just then in the temple itself; but some of them, strengthened by dependants of the high priests, were placed at his disposal, and formed a sufficiently numerous though ill-ordered company, armed in some instances with swords and in others with cudgels,—for, even if the people about the Nazarene offered no resistance, it was impossible to say whether, on such a night as this, when the streets would never be quite empty, force might not be needed at some point or other. Had Judas already been to Bethany and searched in vain? Or had he come upon his eight fellow-disciples on his way there, and perceived at once where the Master was? However this may be, it seems that he had taken the rather superfluous precaution of fixing upon this veritable traitor’s token of a kiss, to avoid the chance of his companions making any mistake in the darkness and confusion and letting the right man escape.

“Friend, do your work!” said Jesus sternly and briefly, rejecting the false kiss, as if he would say, “*That* is no part of it!” Or, as the third Gospel paraphrases it, “Judas, is

it with a kiss that you betray the Son of Man?" But Judas had already drawn back, and the men had seized Jesus, who made no show of resistance, and were securing him in their midst. Meanwhile one of the disciples, the possessor of one of the two swords, made an effort to defend his Master, and drew. It was not Peter, for in that case his name would have been mentioned, and we should not have found him immediately afterwards in the palace of the high priest; but whoever it was, he struck wildly and unskilfully, and all he did was to cut off a piece of the ear of one of the high priest's men. It was well that he was not more successful. And there resistance ended, either because Jesus instantly forbade his followers to use force, or because they themselves perceived that it was hopeless.

According to the first Gospel, Jesus said: "Put back your sword into the sheath! For they who seize the sword shall fall by the sword. Think you that I cannot pray to my Father, and He will send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that so it must be?" But in reality there was not the least time or opportunity for such an elaborate answer; and we should hardly expect a quiet aphorism from the lips of Jesus at such a moment.¹ And moreover this declaration on his part that he could command assistance from on high, and call out sixty thousand angels,—a legion of the heavenly host for each disciple,—agrees but ill with the prayer and the conflict that have gone before. Luke on the other hand begins with graphic touches that have quite the air of truth, and says that when the disciples saw what threatened they cried, "Master! shall we strike?" and without waiting his reply wounded the servant; whereupon Jesus instantly forbade all further resistance with the words, "Nay, let it come!" — that is to say, "Let them take me prisoner." But unfortunately the same Evangelist throws suspicion upon his whole version of the affair by going on to say that Jesus healed the wound by touching the bleeding ear; and that not only officers of the temple but even high priests and elders were included in the band,—all of which is equally incredible.

Jesus made no resistance; but when he saw the weapons in the hands of his assailants he could not refrain from saying, "Have you come out to seize me with swords and cudgels as though I were a robber? I have sat daily in the temple teaching, and you never laid hands upon me." Luke makes

¹ Compare Revelation xiii. 10.

him further rebuke the unworthy conduct, not of the men themselves but of those that sent them, by saying, "But this is your season. This is the power of darkness." And though we cannot accept the addition as authentic, it is far from inappropriate. The other two Gospels have, instead of this, the explanatory words, "But so must the Scriptures be fulfilled!" which are likewise a later addition.

So Jesus left the garden as a prisoner, but with the bearing and the feeling of a conqueror; while a settled calm was in his heart that contrasted strangely with the turmoil of feelings that had mastered him as he entered it. How different it was with his disciples! Seeing that what they had looked on as impossible had really come to pass, and that the Master was defenceless in the power of his enemies, they all fled as they best might even before he was out of the garden. With craven hearts they forsook the Master whom they could not help, but by whose side they might at least have stood, and only sought to save themselves. And yet they seem to have been in no real danger, for we shall presently find that Peter, when recognized as a disciple, was still left at large.

Meanwhile we read of a young man who had risen from his bed and followed Jesus, with a linen cloth thrown round him. The people seized him, but he slipped free of the sheet and escaped naked. Perhaps he was the son of the owner or occupier of Gethsemane. Some have conjectured that he was Mark, from the fact that the circumstance is only mentioned by the second Evangelist. Did he threaten to bring succor from elsewhere, and was that why the people tried to seize him while they left the disciples unmolested? It may be so, but it is all mere guess-work.

A few minutes afterwards the spot which in that one hour had witnessed that soul-moving conflict of the spirit; had witnessed that quiet retirement for prayer and that sudden clatter of arms; had witnessed so much greatness and so much weakness and cowardice,—that spot was once again deserted and wrapped in deathlike stillness. Unless one man still lingered among the trees; one who, though himself a disciple, had yet no personal danger to fear; one whose task was now accomplished, and who was left at leisure to think what he had done,—Judas, the betrayer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.

MATTHEW XXVI. 57-75.¹

THE prisoner was now taken to the high priest's palace without delay. Joseph, surnamed Caiaphas, had occupied the sacred and distinguished office of high priest for nearly eighteen years, which was something very remarkable at that time; and it is he, as president of the Sanhedrim, who seems to have been the principal instrument of the fall of Jesus.² It was at his house that the meeting had been held two days before, at which it was decided to lay violent hands on Jesus; and it was he who had now given the order to apprehend him. As soon as he knew that Judas of Karioth, with an adequate body of men, was on his way to seize the Nazarene, he had sent messengers to rouse a sufficient number of members of the Sanhedrim and bid them instantly attend a meeting; and at the same time he summoned certain people whom he knew to have been horrified by the things they had heard Jesus say, and upon whom he had therefore had his eye, in order that they might serve as witnesses at the trial.

A busy throng was therefore pressing round the high priest's door, and one of the disciples took advantage of the fact to creep inside unnoticed. It was Peter. He had fled from Gethsemane like the other ten; but he was the first to recover himself, and very soon he began to feel that he must be where the Master was, though he still feared to join him openly. So he followed at a distance, entered the house a few minutes later, and passed into the court-yard, where there were a number of court attendants and servants passing to and fro, or lying upon the ground and sitting round a fire that they had lighted because of the night chill. The disciple joined this latter group without saying who he was. He was there at hand in case he could do any thing, and at any rate he would learn the end.

In consequence of the rapid and efficient measures taken by Caiaphas, the trial could proceed almost as soon as the

¹ Mark xiv. 53-72; Luke xxii. 54-71.² Compare p. 5.

prisoner was brought in. But unfortunately we have not the means of forming any clear idea of its progress. The chief cause of this is our very imperfect knowledge of Jewish criminal procedure. Jewish authorities, which are the only ones on which we can rely, are scarce ; and the details in the Talmud which have been supposed to refer to this special trial are mere worthless tales ; — for example, that the herald summoned witnesses to prove the innocence of the prisoner for forty days, and that when no one came forward he was stoned to death and then gibbeted ; or that two witnesses were bribed to listen to what he said to a pretended friend who was drawing utterances from him on purpose for them to hear ; and so forth.

The Christian tradition was from the very beginning rather uncertain, for none of the friends of Jesus were present during the proceedings. Our authorities therefore do not agree. Luke says nothing of witnesses, but makes the Sanhedrim question and condemn Jesus in the morning ; whereas Matthew and Mark place all this, as well as the depositions of the witnesses, in a nocturnal sitting. Luke, however, corrects himself ; for he agrees with the others in placing the mockery, to which Jesus was exposed, in the night,¹ and this must have followed the sentence. The difficulty remains that Matthew and Mark likewise mention a second gathering in the morning, the object of which is far from clear. The same two Gospels fall into further inaccuracies. For instance, they say that the whole Sanhedrim assembled, — which is impossible when we consider the brevity of the notice ; and had it been possible, the friendly disposition towards Jesus² of one or more of the members would have made it very unadvisable to summon them all, and since usage only required that one third of the council, or twenty-three members, should be present, it would have been quite unnecessary also. Matthew and Mark further state that false witnesses came forward, and indeed had been procured ; but we see from their own account that they only mean witnesses hostile to Jesus, for if bribery had been resorted to there would have been no occasion to search so long for satisfactory witnesses, nor would there have been any lack of agreement in the evidence.

We are therefore left in doubt as to many points ; and indeed the whole course of the proceedings, as we are about to sketch it chiefly after Matthew and Mark, is open to legitimate doubt. But when we consider who the judges were,

¹ Luke xxii. 64.

² Mark xv. 43.

we are at any rate safe in assuming that every judicial form prescribed by law or usage was strictly adhered to. It may seem a gross irregularity that the sentence of death was pre-determined; but we must remember that the judges were already absolutely convinced either of the guilt of Jesus in attacking religion, or of the dangerous significance of his person in connection with the Messianic commotion which he caused. Moreover there was crying need of haste.

It is also highly probable that the Sadducees, who enjoyed an evil notoriety for the pitiless severity with which in distinction from the Pharisees they executed justice, were in a majority on this occasion.¹

It was perhaps two or three o'clock in the morning when the council opened. There sat the high priests, elders, and Scribes in a semicircle, upon cushions or rugs, with their legs crossed beneath them. Caiaphas, as president, had taken the seat of honor in the middle. The prisoner, who stood right opposite the high priest, with some officers of the court about him, was at once identified. Then the witnesses were heard. One by one, as we gather from the want of precise agreement in their evidence, they came forward, and, after a solemn warning from the president to speak nothing but the truth, delivered their testimony against the Nazarene.

If they had had any witnesses from Galilee, they would have heard of his Sabbath-breaking, his eating with unwashed hands, and his negligence in the matter of fasts and prayers. But probably there had been no time to summon any but natives of Jerusalem. These witnesses could speak of his triumphal entry and his cleansing of the temple; but all this, though very culpable presumption in the eyes of the council, was no capital offence. The witnesses could speak of the prisoner's attacks upon the character of high officials held in universal honor; but even this, however scandalous, was not enough. Perhaps some one could testify to the language he had used some time before about the dietary laws; but whenever any really important charge was brought forward, there was always a want of that verbal agreement between the witnesses which was absolutely indispensable. At least two witnesses must make exactly the same statement. For a long time the absolute proof required,—that the prisoner was a seducer of the people, that is to say a false prophet or heretic,—was not forthcoming.

¹ Compare Acts iv. 1, 6, v. 17, and v. 34 ff.

At last two witnesses came forward and deposed that “this man had said, ‘I can destroy the Temple of God and raise it up again in three days.’” This at last was an instance of outrageous sacrilege, of blasphemy against the sacred abode of the Lord! To help us to understand the impression such words would make upon these men, we may reflect how nearly Jeremiah lost his life in consequence of a far more innocent saying against the sanctuary, in an age that was far less slavishly attached to the temple than was that of Jesus.¹ Besides the judges fully comprehended that in this saying the temple stood for the whole religion of which it was the centre,—the religion which the Nazarene dared to attempt to overthrow as unclean, that he might then restore it as modified to suit his own conceptions!

Yet even this accusation was not followed by his instant condemnation. It was not that there was any lack of agreement between the witnesses this time; for the statement to that effect appears to be a misconception on the part of Mark, who gives the saying thus: “I will destroy this temple made with hands and raise another not made with hands,”—that is to say, “I will destroy this imperfect human work of the times before the Messiah, and will establish the perfect worship of the kingdom of heaven.” The real cause of delay in uttering sentence appears to have been that the president was bound to give the prisoner the opportunity of clearing himself, if he could, of the charges brought against him. Accordingly he solemnly rose from the ground, and standing at his full height in the middle opposite to Jesus, he cried, “Have you any answer to make against these accusations?” But Jesus observed a lofty and even haughty silence, though without any kind of defiance in his mien. He thought it beneath him to enter with a single word upon the equally bootless and dangerous task of defending himself against men who could not understand him, who would be sure to turn his declarations against him, and who had already determined on his death.

The high priest might now have taken the votes; but he appears to have desired to extract from the prisoner himself a confession which would remove the last semblance of an unjust judgment,—a confession which would throw into fullest light all the charges urged against him, including his reckless attack upon the sacred emblem of religion, and so bring out their true significance and bearing,—a confession, finally, which would show how seriously public order and tranquillity

¹ See vol. ii. pp. 348–350.

were threatened by the person of the Nazarene, so that no difficulty might arise when the Roman governor was applied to for the necessary confirmation of the sentence of death. In a word, the high priest wished to draw from Jesus some declaration concerning his Messianic dignity. The judges had not any doubt that he had intended to assume this dignity, but they had no legal proof of the fact. His first entry into Jerusalem had been accompanied with a sort of Messianic demonstration. It was notorious that some, or perhaps many, of his followers cherished the expectation of seeing him found the kingdom and ascend the throne of the Messiah. A reference to the same expectation might also be traced in that presumptuous saying about the temple. But no one present had ever heard him say, in so many words, that he laid claim to the title and rank of Messiah, though it was easy to infer as much from his bearing, and still more from his preaching, especially in recent days. The question was how to draw an unequivocal declaration from him.

The president's adroitness was equal to the occasion. He knew enough of human nature to find means of forcing his prisoner to answer. "If you are the Messiah, tell us so!" he cried. Jesus could not remain silent after that. It was the high priest, the representative at that moment of the whole people, who called upon him to give an account of his pretensions. No one had a better right to make the demand; and Jesus could neither neglect it nor simply meet it with an unqualified affirmative. "If I told you, you would not believe me; and if I asked you, you would not answer me," he replied with quiet dignity.¹ But Caiaphas was not yet satisfied, and pressed his advantage by resuming in a solemn tone, with the usual Jewish formula for taking an oath under an invocation of the All-seeing Witness and the Holy Judge: "In the presence of the living God I call upon you to say plainly whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God, or not!"

There was a single moment of breathless silence. All eyes were fixed on Jesus in suspense. Then his voice rang proud and clear through the hall: "You have said it! And henceforth you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Omnipotence, — see him coming with the clouds of heaven!"² Then the high priest rent his clothes, as was customary on hearing blasphemy, exposing his naked breast, and cried, with bitter triumph and unmasked fury in his voice: "Blasphemy! What do we want with any further witnesses?

¹ Luke xxii. 67, 68.

² Psalm cx. 1; Daniel vii. 13.

You have heard his blasphemy upon the very spot! What think you?" Then rose on every side one cry of, "He must die!"

Sentence was passed. The trial was over. The Nazarene, as a blasphemer, was condemned to the punishment prescribed by the law for the false prophet.¹

Upon this the meeting of the Council was dissolved or adjourned till the early morning, while the prisoner, now condemned, was put under careful guard. They were dark hours that succeeded! It was reported afterwards that Jesus was exposed to the coarse license of the court attendants. Matthew, partly confirmed by Mark, declares that the members of the Sanhedrim themselves subjected him to the extreme of vulgar insult; but this is hardly credible. The dependants of the high priest practised but too well the lesson given in the Law, which bade them not to fear or reverence a lying prophet.² One would spit in his face, while another struck him with his open hand; and others again took occasion, by the crime for which he was condemned, to drive their cruel sport with him as a false prophet,—tying a cloth across his eyes and then striking him with their fists and saying, "If you are a prophet, tell us who it was that struck you!"

Jesus bore it all without a complaint and without a threat. Though reviled, he reviled not again. He opened not his mouth, but was like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep that is dumb before her shearers.³

Though far from certain, this account of the course of the trial seems to us the most probable. But the declaration of Jesus that, before the very eyes of his judges, he would immediately be glorified with heavenly splendor and return to earth, can hardly be genuine as it stands.⁴ But neither can his answer to the high priest's adjuration have consisted in a simple affirmative; for the contrast between his claims and his position, between his royal title and the sentence that was all but passed, would force him to give some emphatic utterance to his confidence in himself and in his dignity, as a protest against the scorn which his outward circumstances would seem to justify. He may have said that his judges would themselves behold him as the Messiah, since their condemna-

¹ Deuteronomy xiii. xviii. 19-22.

² Deuteronomy xviii. 22.

³ See Isaiah l. 6, liii. 7; 1 Peter ii. 23; vol. ii. p. 421.

⁴ Compare pp. 315, 334, 335.

tion was itself the pledge of the establishment of the kingdom of God, and that they would see that kingdom come to their own terror should they not repent. Some such short declaration he may have made; but the words which our Gospels give are hardly intelligible, for we are not at liberty to take them figuratively and understand them to signify the spread of Messiah's spiritual power upon earth, for instance. Such a conception is quite modern, and is foreign to the New Testament, where sitting on God's right hand and coming upon the clouds must always be taken literally. Now taken thus and introduced by "henceforth," this announcement of a very speedy return in glory would be quite natural towards the end of the apostolic age, when expectation was ever rising to a higher and a higher strain, and men exclaimed: "The Lord is near! He is coming quickly! The Judge is standing at the door!"¹ But on the lips of Jesus, still on earth, still in life, and standing there before his judges, it is quite out of place.

Of still greater interest is the question what the grounds of the condemnation really were. In the first place, what was the exact meaning of the crime of blasphemy? On this point we may gain a satisfactory answer by considering the evidence given about "destroying the temple," the subsequent mockery to which Jesus was exposed as a false prophet, and the final charge of "seducing the people."² The last shade of doubt as to the meaning of the word "blasphemy" is removed by the account of Stephen's trial, which closely resembles that of Jesus, and in which the expression "blasphemous words against Moses and against God" is explained to mean, "words against the temple and the Law." It further appears that Stephen's "blasphemy" consisted in the statement that when the kingdom of God was established Jesus would destroy the temple and change the institutions of Moses.³ Blasphemy, then, was teaching at variance with and in direct contradiction of the only true and established religion. It was a similar conception to that of "heresy" in Christendom. It was an attack upon the infallible truth revealed by God,—an attempt to draw away the people from the institutions of Moses and the true faith. Jesus stood before the Sanhedrim as the Protestants subsequently stood before the Inquisition.

¹ Revelation xxii. 10, 12, 20; James v. 8, 9, *et seq.*

² Luke xxiii. 2, 5; Matthew xxvii. 63.

³ Acts vi. 11, 13, 14.

If we go on to ask the bearing of this upon the condemnation of Jesus for claiming to be the Messiah, it must be admitted that the answer is not clear. For a man to consider and proclaim himself the future Messiah might well appear to the Sadducees fanaticism and political treason; and for Jesus to do so without any thing whatever to substantiate his claim might brand him as a false prophet in the eyes of the Pharisees,—but it was no blasphemy. In the eyes of his enemies, however, the guilt of his desperate attempt to reform the national religion was aggravated by his pretensions to the title of Messiah, which brought out the full danger of his schemes, and showed how thoroughly in earnest he was with his shameful plans, and how completely he considered himself personally qualified to carry them out. This is why Caiaphas was so anxious to have his suspicions confirmed upon this point, and in lack of direct testimony determined to extract the declaration from Jesus himself.

Finally, if called upon to say whether Jesus was justly or unjustly condemned, we should answer that from the point of the Law—that is to say, on the principles of Israelitish jurisprudence—he was guilty. We must remember that religious freedom was not dreamed of in the Jewish State any more than it subsequently was in the States of the Church, for instance, as long as the chief priest of Rome had temporal jurisdiction. Indeed, before the French Revolution there was hardly such a thing as religious freedom anywhere,—and for how short a time have Spain, Italy, and Scandinavia known it! Now Jesus had most certainly come into open antagonism with the Jewish religion, with the essential principle and with many special utterances of the Law, with the established practice of the temple service, with the inviolable institutions of tradition, and with the sacred persons of the priests and leaders. From the Jewish point of view, accordingly,—that is to say, on the assumption of the infallible, absolutely divine character of the revelation, of the Scripture, of the Law,—Jesus deserved condign punishment. Any ecclesiastical religion resting upon a revelation would have condemned him to death as a blasphemer.

The real guilt lay with the religious prejudice, the orthodoxy, with which Jesus had come into collision, and with which at last he had closed in a struggle for life and death.

We left Peter in the courtyard,—from which there was an ascent of several steps into the judgment-hall,—warming

himself at the fire with some of the attendants ; but when the members of the Council left the palace to snatch a few hours' rest he was no longer there, — so that if Jesus was led there after his condemnation he must have found himself without a single friend. What had become of his disciple, then ?

He had not considered the danger to which he was exposing himself, or whether he was really able to face it. This appeared but too soon. As he stood there assuming the air of an indifferent spectator as best he could, he excited the attention of one of the female servants of Caiaphas, who looked hard at him, went up to him, and said, “ Why ! you are one of the followers of Jesus of Galilee ! ” Perhaps it was only a chance impression ; perhaps she had some reason for it, — but in any case Peter was taken quite by surprise. Every one looked at him ; and he, utterly unnerved and fearing he might be driven out with ignominy, or perhaps made a prisoner, answered, — scarcely knowing what he said, — “ I don't know what you mean ! ”

But if he expected to escape in this way he was mistaken. Attention was now fixed upon him. Presently he moved towards the porch, — for though as yet he had come to no true sense of his own cowardice and faithlessness, he was no longer at his ease. Here the same or another girl noticed him, and said to the people standing by, “ He is one of that Nazarene's company ; ” and Peter, thinking it was now too late to retreat, repeated the denial more emphatically : “ I do not know the man ! ” Then, to carry the matter off, he began to speak to them about other things ; but he only succeeded in exposing himself, — for his Galilæan accent at once betrayed him, — and several of them turned upon him with the words, “ Well, but you are one of them, for we can tell by your talk that you come from Galilee ! ” Then Peter was driven to desperation, and said, with an oath and an imprecation on himself if it were not true, “ I do not know him ! ”

The servants shrugged their shoulders in contempt, while Peter staggered through the passage and out of the gate, burning with shame and confusion. Out there in the stillness of night he came to himself, and knew that he had shamefully denied his Master ! Fool that he had been, in his reckless self-confidence and blindness, to fling those earnest warnings of his Master to the wind ! And now he had denied him again and yet again !

He was utterly broken down. Tears of shame and deep repentance started to his eyes, and he did not check their flow. Those bitter tears were the blessed sign that he would rise again from his deep fall.

The Gospels tell us that at the third denial the cock crowed, and that Peter then remembered the Master's prediction. According to Mark the cock crowed once at the first denial and again at the third, which accords with the form in which the same Evangelist gives the prediction of Jesus. Luke, who represents Jesus as having spent the night hours under the charge of the guards and not before the Sanhedrim, says that he turned round and looked at his disciple when he had denied him for the third time. This pathetic touch, however, depends upon the special representations of the third Evangelist, on which we have said enough already.¹ The disagreements of the Gospels in this matter are impossible to remove, but are of small importance. The fact of the denial itself, repeated as it naturally would be with ever-growing emphasis, is clear; but we should not dare even to insist upon the exact number of three denials.

Want of self-knowledge and too great confidence had brought the friend and disciple of Jesus to so deep a fall, and repentance and humility would raise him from it.

This scene unlocks the significance to that beautiful description of Jesus walking upon the sea and Peter coming out to him.²



CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH CONFIRMED.

MARK XV. 1-20 a.³

THE first light of morning found the members of the Council once again assembled. In their zeal for the service of the Lord they had almost completely robbed themselves of the sweet repose which should have followed the day of rejoicing! But there was need of haste. The whole matter must if possible be settled, and the Nazarene exe-

¹ See pp. 419, 420, 428, 429.

² See pp. 268, 269.

³ Matthew xxvii. 1, 2, 11-31a; Luke xxiii. 1-25.

cuted before the people were about, for fear his disciples might make some attempt to rescue him.

Why this second meeting was necessary we cannot say. Perhaps it was needed for the observance of some form without which the sentence of death would not have legal force. It is possible, for instance, that the night meeting had not been attended by the requisite number of councillors, or that meetings must be called in some particular place, such as the temple court, or within certain hours, in order to give validity to their decisions. It has been supposed that the whole Sanhedrim¹ was now summoned to hear a short summary of the results of the trial, and then confirm the provisional sentence passed by those who had been present, and so make it a formal decision. But the number of the members (no less than seventy) and the shortness of the notice make this conjecture very unlikely. The most probable supposition is that the morning sitting was simply convened to consider the best means of carrying out the sentence.

The Law prescribed stoning; but to venture upon overstepping their real authority and infringing upon the jurisdiction of their Roman masters by proceeding to the execution² would only have been safe if they could have calculated with absolute certainty upon the support of the people, who would have had to carry out the sentence. In this instance it would obviously be well to proceed in due course, and to request the governor to confirm the sentence of death; in which case the Nazarene would perish on the cross as a tumult maker,—for the Council perfectly understood that in laying the matter before the Roman authorities it would be necessary to lay chief stress upon the fact that Jesus had proclaimed himself the Messiah, the mighty king whom the Jews were expecting, and was therefore a dangerous character. What was really the head and front of his offence, namely, his attack upon the Jewish religion, would hardly be comprehensible to the heathen governor, and would probably seem unimportant to him.³ It might therefore be kept in the background. The charge of sedition, then, was carefully made out; and if a memorial was drawn up to present to the governor it doubtless insisted upon the prisoner's pretensions to the dignity of King of the Jews, which his own unequivocal confession, together with his conduct and that of his

¹ Matthew xxvii. 1; Mark xv. 1. See also p. 429.

² See p. 5; and Acts vii. 58.

³ See Acts xviii. 14-16, xxiii. 29.

followers, was said to substantiate. But most likely the accusation was made by word of mouth. In any case it was followed by a request that orders might be given to proceed at once to the execution of the sentence passed by the Sanhedrim on the grounds alleged.

Early in the morning, then, a deputation from this body waited upon the Roman, and took the prisoner, now bound and guarded, with them. They were doubtless supported by many other members of the Council who came out of interest in the proceedings, and held themselves in readiness to support their petition if needful. Pontius Pilate (of whom we have already had reason to form a very unfavorable opinion¹) had come with some troops from Cæsarea to keep order during the feast days, as usual, and had probably quartered himself in Herod's palace, in the northwestern portion of the upper city.² This magnificent and enormous castle is extolled by Josephus even above the temple. With its two gigantic wings, its beautiful and stately colonnades, its luxurious park, its numerous outbuildings, and the well-turreted and lofty wall that ran all round it,—it was at once a mighty fortress and an entrancing pleasure house. Here Pilate, after the Roman custom, was accessible after sunrise to give audiences and pronounce judgment. In accordance with the established rule of publicity in the administration of justice, the accusation and subsequent inquiry must have been made in the open air, on the far-stretching terrace in front of the central edifice. Here the governor would order his seat of judgment to be placed as soon as he heard the nature of the business, and here his assessors would sit beside him, while the accusers took the seats assigned to them, and the prisoner was stationed in front. Nothing is said of interpreters, though all the proceedings were certainly conducted in Greek.³ The members of the Sanhedrim would be able to understand and speak this language, and Jesus himself can hardly have been entirely ignorant of it; for the population of the district from which he came was of very mixed nationality, and included a certain number of Greeks.

If the councillors had flattered themselves that Pilate, who never seemed to think much of the life of a Jew, would grant their request at once, they were disappointed. He went into the matter.⁴ When he had ascertained the prisoner's name he asked him whether he admitted the charge brought against

¹ See pp. 96, 97, 348.

² See p. 358.

² See Map IV. No. 4.

⁴ Compare Acts xxv. 16.

him : “Are you the king of the Jews?” The Gospels say that Jesus assented ; but this appears so extraordinary as to be almost incredible. For, in the first place, Jesus could not have made the admission truthfully ; and, in the next place, it would have decided the whole matter, and made any further examination and accusation unnecessary, any further doubt or investigation impossible ; and, lastly, the sequel seems to indicate that Jesus made no reply whatever, either to the accusations brought against him or to the question of the governor.¹

It is certain, at any rate, that Pilate did not believe in the guilt of Jesus. And no wonder ; for he had never heard of any attempt at sedition on the part of this man, and did not think his appearance was that of an adventurer. As soon as the high priests saw that their accusation had failed to produce its effect, they began to work it out in more detail. Luke gives us some examples of the line they took : “We have discovered after careful investigation that this man is a seducer of the people, and forbids them to pay tribute to the Cæsar, saying that he himself is the Messiah, the king.” “He stirs up the people all through Judæa. He began in that turbulent land of Galilee, and now he has come here.” And according to another edition of the third Gospel they added, “He makes the women and children apostates, for he would abolish the purifications prescribed to us.” “He annuls the Law and the prophets.”

We can easily see to what extent the councillors were justified, from their own point of view, in making these accusations.² They certainly regarded Jesus as a destroyer of religion and a seducer of the people ; and that saying of his about the tribute, when brought into connection with his claims to the Messianic dignity, might well be turned against him, for in the kingdom of God there would of course be no trace of the Roman supremacy. On the other hand, it is unfair to draw inferences from a man’s words which he himself would emphatically reject ; and of course it was only the grossest party spirit that could dictate these malicious accusations. On this ground we can understand why Jesus still observed a lofty silence when the opportunity was given him of clearing himself. The misrepresentations of his conduct and his teaching were the result of obstinate blindness, and no attempt to remove them would avail. Silence was the

¹ Matthew xxvii. 12, 14.

² See pp. 375, 6, 89, 185, 280, 281, 309 f.

only means of preserving his dignity. But the governor, in very natural surprise, exclaimed : "Have you no answer? You hear all their accusations?" In vain. Jesus would not reply ; and his silence, while increasing Pilate's surprise, deepened his conviction of the prisoner's innocence.

It is difficult to say what course the trial might now have taken had not a sudden turn been given to it at this moment. It is not quite clear how it was caused. The governor, we are told, was in the habit of gratifying the people at the Passover by releasing a prisoner whom they selected. This custom is entirely unknown to us except from the Gospels, and was probably introduced by Pilate himself, or one of his predecessors, to conciliate or appease the Jews. In any case the object of the custom was obviously to prevent seditions at the great feast of the nation's freedom. Sometimes the execution of rebels was deferred to the Passover, in order to serve as a terrible example ; while the pardon of a popular favorite, on the other hand, might have the effect of propitiating the people. Thus two opposite ways were taken to reach the same goal.

Now while Pilate was sitting in judgment and the councillors were arguing their points against Jesus, the thin attendance of the public at this early hour was swelled by a considerable concourse of citizens, who came from various quarters up the hill and through the gates of the royal fortress to ask the governor to grant the usual pardon to a prisoner. Was this the morning fixed by usage ; or were they drawn together by a chance report that the question of releasing the prisoner was now being dealt with, or was shortly coming on ? At such a season it needed little to collect a growing crowd.

No doubt the high priests began to be anxious and uneasy when they saw the people streaming together. Pilate, on the other hand, saw a sudden chance of putting an end to the trial, which he hardly knew how to deal with, and releasing this extraordinary prisoner. He would get the people to demand his liberation, and then all would be settled ; for he had clearly perceived that the Jewish authorities cherished a rancorous hatred against the Nazarene, but he did not suppose the people would share it. Perhaps he knew, or had just learned from the accusers, that this man had a following among the people. So the Roman rose from his seat, demanded silence with a gesture of command, and said : "I

will grant your request! Shall I release Jesus, the King of the Jews?" Then he resumed his seat to give them time to consider.

Pilate had been as clumsy as usual. His tone of contemptuous mockery was little calculated to win assent to his proposition. And yet he had nearly accomplished his end. But the councillors, maddened at the thought of losing their prey after all, bent all their energies to diverting the popular choice from Jesus, and had the presence of mind to suggest a genuine popular favorite. There happened to be a certain Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus son of Abbas, in prison at the time. His full name has only been preserved in certain manuscripts of the first Gospel. Elsewhere, out of a very natural reverence for the name of *Jesus*, he is simply called Barabbas. Matthew tells us he was a celebrated prisoner; Mark, that he had been concerned in a tumult that ended in bloodshed. He was probably a fanatical patriot, who had killed a Roman soldier in his zeal for the Lord. Perhaps he was to be executed that very day. This was the man whom the members of the Sanhedrim suggested to the people, in order to cause a diversion and prevent their demanding the liberation of Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew, indeed, makes the suggestion come from Pilate himself, who says: "Shall I release Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus called Christ?" But this is improbable, as it would only have allowed the people a choice between two men.

But whoever first brought forward the name of Barabbas, and whether the people if left to themselves would have decided in favor of Jesus or not, it is certain that Pilate was quite thrown out of his calculations. Perhaps a few voices were raised for Jesus at first, and possibly the liberation of some third prisoner was demanded here and there; but those who dissented from the majority were soon shouted down, and from every quarter of the ample court the cry resounded, "Barabbas! Let us have Barabbas!" The dependants of the councillors and the men of Jerusalem generally were doubtless loudest in the shout, for the priestly authorities had great influence over them. A desire to cross the wishes of Pilate, resentment at his haughty and contemptuous language, the sight of the unsuccessful prophet or Messiah, and partiality to the zealot, all contributed towards this wretched choice.

Pilate saw that what he had regarded as a happy inspiration had turned out a blunder. But instead of at once recovering himself he persisted, with unpardonable weakness, in

making the people judge in his place. He concealed his vexation and disappointment, and asked, "Then what shall I do with this man that you call the King of the Jews?" He gave them an opening to demand his liberation also. But in vain. "Crucify him!" shrieked the councillors and their dependants; and the multitude, determined to thwart Pilate, smarting under his repeated scoff, and having definitely espoused the cause of the Sanhedrim, took up the murderous cry of "Crucify him!" They were eager to show the insulting Roman that his helpless prisoner was no king of *their* choosing, whatever *he* might be pleased to call him! The governor's anger now began to rise; but he only made matters worse, and exposed his own weakness and folly yet more by his expostulation, "Well, but what harm has he done?" The stormy cry rose wilder than ever from all sides of the court, "Crucify him!" Then Pilate gave it up. He had bound his own hands, and really did not care about the matter enough to make a vigorous stand against the popular demand and risk disturbances. He saw that he must let the excited people have their way, ordered the release of Barabbas, and turned to Jesus with the few but fearful words, "I sentence you to the cross!"

The supreme authority had ratified the sentence of the Sanhedrim.

Here let us pause to review the later additions to this narrative, preserved in Matthew and Luke. The feelings of early Christendom were not satisfied by this tradition of the trial before the procurator. They demanded more emphatic witness to the innocence of Jesus, and warmer interest on the part of the Roman. As the heathen world had given Christianity a reception which, when compared with the stubbornness of the Jews, might be considered favorable, so they felt that Pilate himself, as representing the heathen, must have taken a very definite stand against the Sanhedrim and the people on behalf of Jesus; must have made every effort to rescue him, instead of displaying the comparative indifference that we have witnessed. This idea was afterwards worked out into such fictions as we find in the apocryphal "Gospel of Nicodemus," where the trial is expanded and embellished with every manner of supernatural adjunct past all recognition. But all this, as foreign to our present purpose, we may pass by.

Matthew tells us that when Pilate had given the Jews their

choice between Jesus and Barabbas and resumed his seat, he received a message from his wife, whom later traditions call Claudia Procula, to this effect: “Take care what you do to that righteous man, for I have had dreadful dreams about him in the night!” It was an omen, sent to warn her husband not to draw down the vengeance of the deity upon his head. We may call to mind in this connection how large a part dreams play elsewhere in the latest additions to this Gospel.¹ Now when Pilate, we are told soon afterwards, saw that his attempt to rescue Jesus had failed, that his opposition to the people’s stormy demands was unavailing, and that there was imminent risk of a tumult, he attempted to bring the people to their senses by a visible presentment of his own feelings. He sent for a basin of water, and washed his hands before all the multitude, with the words: “I will have nothing to do with shedding this man’s blood. I publicly renounce all share in his execution. The whole responsibility rests upon you!” But the surging multitude, in its miserable blindness, did not hesitate for a moment to incur the appalling guilt which it failed to recognize, and shrieked, “His blood be upon us and our children!” Then, at last, Pilate gave way. But this scrupulous anxiety to preserve a human life is still less in keeping with the Roman procurator’s character than the adoption of the Jewish custom of washing the hands in token of innocence;² and the imprecation that follows is evidently laid upon the lips of the people in view of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was regarded as a punishment for the murder of the Messiah.³

Luke goes still further in describing the heathen governor’s favorable disposition, and in giving testimonies to the innocence of Jesus. He makes Pilate, on hearing that Jesus is a Galilean, and therefore under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, send him to the Tetrarch himself, who was in Jerusalem celebrating the Passover. Herod, says the Evangelist, was greatly delighted, for he had long wished to see Jesus,⁴ in consequence of all he had heard of him; and now he hoped he would work some wonder in his presence. But Jesus did not so much as deign to answer any of his questions, though the members of the Sanhedrim, who were also there, made violent accusations against him. Then the careless and irreverent prince compensated himself for his disappointment by joining

¹ See pp. 41, 70, 71.

² Deuteronomy xxi. 6 ff.; compare 2 Samuel iii. 28.

³ Compare Matthew xxi. 41, xxii. 7.

⁴ See p. 372.

his troops in mocking Jesus as a harmless fanatic, and clothing him in a royal robe of shining white. Then he sent him back to Pilate, whom he thanked for his courtesy, explaining at the same time that there was no pretext for charging Jesus with political offences. After that the hostility between the Roman procurator and the only surviving son of Herod gave place to friendship.

Pilate, says Luke, had from the first declared to the members of the Sanhedrim and the people that he could find no guilt in the man ; and now, according to the third Gospel, he summoned them again and said : “ You have brought this man before me as a seducer of the people, but I have examined him in your presence and have not found him guilty of any of the things with which you charge him. Nor has Herod found him guilty, for I referred you to him ; but nothing was brought to light to justify the sentence of death. I will have him beaten, therefore, to satisfy you, and will then release him.” Then came the cry for the release of Barabbas rather than Jesus, upon which Pilate spoke again, with the undisguised intention of securing the release of Jesus ; and when the people shouted “ Crucify him ! ” Pilate declared for the third time that he could find nothing worthy of death in him, and repeated his proposal only to scourge him. All in vain !

The conduct here ascribed to Pilate is highly improbable ; and so is that of Herod, who had wished to get Jesus out of the way, not long before, as a dangerous character.¹ The statement in the Acts² that Herod and Pilate had conspired with heathen and Israelites *against* Jesus the holy servant of God is far less unlikely ; but the co-operation and subsequent friendship of Pilate and Herod are in any case very improbable, for these two men must always have been jealous and suspicious of each other, since Herod was constantly aiming at reuniting all the portions of his father’s kingdom under his own sceptre.³ Finally, the scourging which Jesus was forced to undergo was not intended as an independent punishment. It generally preceded executions, especially upon the cross ; and it was inflicted upon Jesus, according to the most trustworthy accounts, as the beginning of the crucifixion. Like the mockery to which he was also subjected, it must have followed directly upon the delivery of the sentence, and in the palace of the procurator.

The oldest Gospels give the following account of it : The

¹ See pp. 274 f.

² See pp. 375, 3, 4, 348.

² Acts iv. 27.

executioners, in this case the soldiers, seized the prisoner and stripped him, fastened his hands behind his back, bound him to a post with his back bent forward, and scourged him with thongs or ropes, with some sharp, hard substance fixed to the ends. A hideous barbarity! When this was over, it appears that some preparations were still needful before they could set out for the place of execution, and the Nazarene was, therefore, kept in a guard-room or an inner court. But even here he had no respite. The brutalized soldiers found a pleasure in exposing the defenceless and tortured "king" to the coarse license of their raillery. They called all the band together, and instead of giving Jesus his own clothes again, they threw a scarlet robe upon him, such as the Roman warriors and generals wore, while from time to time it was conferred as an honor upon foreign princes. Then one of them brought a reed and thrust it into his right hand for a sceptre; while another hastily cut some bits of bramble, twisted them loosely into a crown, and forced them upon his temples. Then they bowed in mock solemnity before him, and cried, "All hail, thou king of the Jews!" After which they spit in his face, and snatched the reed from his hand to strike him with it on the head. Thus they drove their cruel sport with him till every thing was ready for the execution. Then they hastily stripped him of the scarlet mantle, gave him his own clothes again, and led him out to the hill of Golgotha, outside the city gate, where the crucifixion was to take place.

The heart turns sick at such a scene! What a depth of shame and suffering! And Jesus knew that the worst was yet to come. What could have kept him from sinking into dull despair, what could have preserved him from loathing and detesting his fellow-men in the midst of all this cruelty and coarseness, except the strength of faith and love, and the constant recurrence to the thought that in spite of all, or rather by means of all, that he must suffer, even to the crushing horrors of the end, the goal of his life would be reached, though only in his death?¹ And so his deep humiliation does but make him greater and more glorious in our eyes, does but deepen our reverence for him, and teach us to feel the holiness of suffering. God was with him of a truth in these hours. The Father had not left him alone.²

¹ See p. 416.

² John viii. 29 xvi. 32.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

MARK XV. 20b-47.¹

IN accordance with the general custom the sentence of death was carried out at once, under the orders of the judge; and in this case therefore by the Roman soldiers, and not, as Luke implies, by the Jews.² The proceedings before Pilate may have occupied an hour, or at the outside two hours, and the further preparations cannot have caused any long delay. It is therefore very possible that the crucifixion took place at about nine o'clock in the morning, as is indicated in a note of later origin in the second Gospel.³ The whole force which the procurator had brought from Cæsarea to garrison the royal fortress, consisting of at least a cohort or battalion, was standing under arms in the court; and a maniple, or company, was now ordered out to keep order during the execution, the whole conduct of which was entrusted to the officer in command.

The procession set out through the gate of the palace and along the street. It was usual on such occasions to go through the most frequented quarters of the city, in order to give the terrible example its greatest possible effect. In front went a herald proclaiming the culprit's offence, which was further set out in painted letters on a white board to be nailed over the head of the cross; and in this case the words were "The King of the Jews." Then came the condemned man himself, carrying, as a sign of disgrace, the instrument of torture upon which he was to end his life; not the whole of it, however, but only the cross-beam to be fixed upon the upright stake. Together with Jesus two robbers, whose execution had been delayed till the feast time, were led out to death.

Nothing is recorded of the progress to the place of execution, except that when the city gate was reached the cross was taken away from Jesus. This was no mark of pity, but only a measure to prevent delay and trouble; for in spite

¹ Matthew xxvii. 31b-61; Luke xxiii. 26-56.

² Luke xxiii. 25.

³ Mark xv. 25.

of the strokes and blows of the executioners Jesus could go no further: his strength failed, and he could bear the beam no longer. A certain Simon, a native of Cyrene in North Africa, who happened to be just entering the city, was compelled by the soldiers to take up the beam and carry it to the place of death. It was naturally against his will that he was pressed into the service; and since the second Gospel calls him the father of Alexander and Rufus,¹ as if these names belonged to well-known Christians, it has been conjectured that Simon, being brought into such close contact with Jesus, afterwards joined the community of his disciples.

All else that we are told under this head is very doubtful, if not distinctly legendary. Thus, Luke tells us that in the crowd which followed the procession there were many women who wept and lamented for Jesus, with cries and gestures of grief. But he turned to them and disclaimed their pity with the words: “Daughters of Jerusalem! weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children. For days of such unutterable woe are coming that the blessing of motherhood shall be held a curse, and the childless woman shall be counted blessed in Israel. Then shall the fugitives, in their despair, cry to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ For if all this comes upon the green tree [upon me], what will not be done to the dry [this abandoned generation]!” There is a tone of lofty earnestness and pity in these words; but they are not given by either of the first two Evangelists; we are quite unprepared to hear them from Jesus, who had hitherto been absolutely silent, and was now utterly exhausted; the occasion hardly afforded an opportunity for their utterance, and they give us the impression of having been written after the destruction of Jerusalem.²

The later traditions of the Church tell us of a certain woman (Veronica) who was deeply moved with pity, wiping the brow of Jesus with a napkin, and in reward for her compassion finding the image of the sufferer stamped upon it ever afterwards! On the other hand, we are told of a Jew (Ahasuerus) who heartlessly drove Jesus away when he would have rested for a moment on the bench before his house; upon which Jesus condemned him to wander restlessly over the earth without being able to die, till he should return from heaven as the Christ. This was the Wandering Jew,—the Jewish people, condemned for its obduracy to

¹ Compare Romans xvi. 13.

² Compare p. 401.

survive when every other ancient people was no more, without a fatherland,—in exile everywhere,—till the kingdom of God be perfected. Finally, we may mention that from the fourteenth century down to the present day the streets have been pointed out in Jerusalem along which Jesus is said to have been taken. They are known as the *Via Dolorosa*, or Woeful Way, and lead through the Sheep Gate, between Moriah and Bezetha, past the palace of Pilate (the castle of Antonia), through the Gate of Judgment, to Golgotha;¹ and the visitor is still shown the very spots at which each detail is said to have occurred.

Though the ancients had no regular places of execution,—like our “Traitor’s Hill,” for instance,—yet they always chose some place outside the city gates, and by preference a spot exposed to view on every side, conspicuous from a distance, and hard by some frequented thoroughfare. Doubtless these conditions were fulfilled by the place selected on this occasion, which was Golgotha. Its name, which signifies “skull,” suggests a bare, round hill, which we must suppose to have been situated just outside the city, at some spot where there would be crowds of passers-by. Its site, however, can no longer be identified.² The tradition that points out the present Golgotha, where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands, is groundless.

The destination was soon reached, and the execution begun. We will not outrage the feelings of our readers by describing all the details of what followed, but we cannot pass it by completely. The savage inhumanity of this form of execution, expressly designed to make the criminal die as slowly and painfully as possible, is beyond all description; and it had further gathered round itself the maximum of disgrace and shame,—for it was reserved for slaves, robbers, deserters, and rioters. Entirely foreign to the Jewish penal code, it had been introduced and freely practised by the Romans in their provinces, as a palpable proof of their supremacy, and an example well calculated to inspire terror. The punishment had now become so familiar to the Jews that the people themselves had instantly suggested it to Pilate in answer to his question, “What shall I do with Jesus?”

The cross had various forms. Sometimes the beams were crossed obliquely, like an X; sometimes they were at right

¹ See Map IV.

² See vol. ii. pp. 4, 5; compare Hebrews xiii. 12.

angles, with the upright stake projecting slightly above the cross-beam, thus ; sometimes the cross had the shape of a ; and the most ancient tradition says that this was the case with the cross of Jesus. At the place of execution, the longest and thickest beam, or stake, was fixed upright in the ground, either when the execution took place or beforehand, and was duly secured against swaying. Then the criminal was stripped, his extended arms were secured by strong cords to the other beam, and then long, sharp nails were driven through his open palms deep into the wood. Then the cross-beam was raised above the upright stake, or fixed near the top of it. The sufferer's body was so far supported as to prevent its weight from wrenching his hands away from the nails, and his feet — which nearly touched the ground, since the cross was seldom high — were fixed to the upright beam by a sharp iron bolt. Then the executioner's task was over, and it only remained to keep guard. The scorching heat of the sun, the insupportable thirst, the inflamed and burning wounds, and the strained, unnatural attitude, each of which grew more intolerable every moment while none could be alleviated, the rush of blood to the heart and brain, the unbearable pain and exhaustion, — all these must do the rest. None of the wounds were fatal in themselves, and if no finishing-stroke were given to the victim, it was generally four-and-twenty hours, and sometimes, if his system were strong, two or three days, before his tortures had an end.

And on this occasion, also, every thing was done as usual. The place of execution was lined by soldiers. The three stakes were already there, or were now erected not far from one another. The middle one was for the Nazarene. And here one touch of humanity lightens the hideous spectacle. A Jewish usage¹ prescribed that a numbing potion should be given the victims before they suffered. Jewish tradition states that distinguished ladies of Jerusalem prepared it at their own expense, from strong wine and grains of frankincense. The first Gospel speaks of wine mixed with wormwood,² and Mark of wine and myrrh. In any case it was a fragrant drink of numbing and therefore pain-allaying properties. But when the executioners offered the cup to Jesus he refused it, perhaps after tasting it half-mechanically and perceiving from its bitter though pleasant taste the purpose it

¹ See Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7.

² Matthew xxvii. 34, after an amended version.

was meant to serve. He wished to preserve his full consciousness to the very last, and he felt strong enough in God to bear the worst.

They stripped him of his clothes, which fell to the executioners ; he was bound, nailed, lifted up, nailed again. Above his head the board already mentioned was fixed, recording his offence in Latin, Greek, and (if Pilate's writers understood enough of the language) Hebrew. Then the two robbers right and left of him met the same fate.

The soldiers had done their work. Four sentries were left to guard each cross, and were probably relieved at noon, the relays succeeding each other every three hours. The booty was divided by throwing lots from a helmet, to decide who should have the upper and who the under garment. The officer in charge meanwhile paced up and down, and remained upon the place of execution as the responsible agent of the procurator.

There Jesus hung, a prey to unutterable tortures, like the refuse and the scum of society, laden with its curse ! Alas ! it seemed as though he were rejected and thrust out by every one ; for not a single friend had dared to show his face upon the hill. Ah, yes ! there, behind that group of spectators, is a little cluster of faithful Galilæan women, — Magdalene, Mary, Salome, and others, — who had come with him to the feast, from the fatherland.¹ Although the glorious expectations of their faith had been disappointed no less than those of the disciples, yet their love never flagged. And when the hearts of all the men had failed them, these faithful women dared to come to the hill of crucifixion, that, if by chance Jesus should turn his eyes around in hopes of meeting some responsive glance of love and pity, he might not look in vain. All honor to their steadfast love !

Alas ! his enemies were also there, and did not spare him even now. They felt no reverence for the greatness of his woe ; they had nothing but taunts for the utter wreck of his mighty schemes. While many of the spectators looked on in silence, there were some who could not leave him unmolested even now. Passers by railed at him, wagging their heads in sign of contempt and mockery. These were apparently members of the Council and their subordinates in the first instance, who were acquainted with the details of the trial, and turned their poisoned shafts against him as the unsuccessful reformer

¹ See pp. 185, 186, 336, &c.

and the false Messiah. "Ah! you who can break down the temple and build it up again in three days, can you save yourself from the cross?" cried one, while the rest applauded his sally. "If you really are the Son of God, why don't you come down?" was caught up from mouth to mouth among another group. We are expressly told that the high priests and Scribes hurled at him the taunting challenge: "There hangs the Messiah,—Israel's mighty king! If he will but come down from the cross, we will all believe in him." Nay, so infectious is the spirit of reviling mockery that the very robbers who were crucified with him caught up the cry,—as if they found some alleviation in their pain by venting their rage and spleen on Jesus.

According to the Gospels, even his own deeds of mercy were now thrown in his teeth: "He saved others, but he cannot save himself!" And since the primitive Christians regarded the twenty-second Psalm as the programme of the sufferings of the Messiah, Matthew goes the length, in the face of all likelihood, of making the councillors cry: "He trusted in God! Then let Him deliver him, if He takes pleasure in him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God!'"¹ We need not stay to consider this any further; but we would fain know, were it possible, whether the words of scorn went home, and what was passing in the sufferer's heart during these hours. But here we can only guess; for Jesus, with unbroken firmness, preserved a lofty, a heroic, a majestic silence. He had not so deadened his human feelings by fanatical exaltation as to rejoice, as many martyrs have done, in the midst of his sufferings. But he showed such strength of soul, such self-command, that in the midst of hideous tortures not a sigh or lamentation broke from his lips,—at any rate until the very hour of his death. Such was the fruit of his unrelaxed self-discipline, and, at the last, of his prayer in Gethsemane!² So after all we are not wholly without indications of the mood in which he met his death. He had done all he could to keep his consciousness unclouded, and even in these hours he lived with God. He doubtless thought of his suffering and death, since the event had shown that they were inevitable, as a part of his life-task,—needful to insure the establishment of the kingdom of God. He had been faithful, he had shrunk from nothing, and it was not in vain that he had braved the worst. He could think of the past without self-reproach; and the

¹ See Psalm xxii. 7-9; compare vol. ii. pp. 308-310.

² See pp. 424, 425.

future was rich in the fairest hopes. His eye was turned to heaven with unbroken trust in God ; with unextinguished love for man he looked down from his cross upon those blinded multitudes and that city that murdered the prophets !

To a certain extent at least his thoughts are strikingly interpreted by a few sentences which the third Evangelist lays upon his lips. He tells us that as Jesus was being fixed to the cross, or immediately afterwards, he said : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ! ” But at this moment he was surrounded only by the Roman soldiers, who were simply doing their duty ; whereas the prayer must, from the nature of the case, be referred to the Jews, and especially the members of the Sanhedrim. And yet, even if he did not give it utterance, there lived in the soul of Jesus through these hours of horror an exceeding love even of those who hated him,—and hated him because of his fidelity to God,—which might well force a prayer for them to his lips ; there lived an unshaken reverence for human nature which could not admit the possibility of a wanton crime committed with open eyes.¹ Again, when the Jewish elders mocked him, and the soldiers while offering him vinegar followed their example, Luke makes him speak a second time. One of the two robbers, he says, had been reviling him and saying, “ Are not you the Messiah ? Well, then, rescue yourself and us ! ” But the other rebuked him and said : “ Have you no fear of God while undergoing the same punishment as this man ? And we indeed rightly, for we are receiving what our deeds deserve ; but he has done no wrong.” Then he turned to the cross that stood between them and said : “ Jesus, think of me when you come with your kingdom ! ” Upon which Jesus spoke the words of comfort : “ Of a truth I tell you that this very day you shall be with me in paradise.” Here again we are unable to accept the words as historical ; partly because the first two Gospels leave no room for them, and because of their reference to the paradise in the underworld ;² but chiefly because they represent the malefactor as expecting Jesus to return to earth as the Messiah, and to raise up and judge the dead. But, for all that, the unshaken confidence in his own future, the desire to save the lost even now, and the lofty sense of conscious dignity which are here ascribed to Jesus, unquestionably reflect with perfect fidelity his tone of heart and mind even in these hours of horror.

¹ See pp. 228 ff., 175 : compare Acts vii. 60 and Isaiah liii. 12.

² See *ante*, pp. 40, 42.

Another exclamation is recorded by our oldest witnesses, Matthew and Mark, as uttered from the cross. About three in the afternoon, it seems, when his life was fast ebbing, his suffering became for a moment more than he could bear, and at last he broke the lofty silence he had hitherto preserved by a piercing cry of pain that almost sounded like a cry of despair. The Evangelists accordingly, with the twenty-second Psalm still in their minds, interpret the cry by the opening words of that poem : “Eli, Eli ! lama sabacthani?” — “My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?” Now some of those who were standing by, the Evangelists go on to say, when they heard his cry, exclaimed in mockery, “Listen ! he is calling for Elijah !” upon which one of them ran up, and dipping a sponge into the vinegar put it on the end of a cane, reached it up to his lips to refresh him a little, and said, “Well, then, let us see whether Elijah will come and take him down.” Or perhaps these latter words were spoken by some of the others who held their companion back : “Let it alone ! we must see whether Elijah comes to take him down.” Now this supposed exclamation of Jesus has sometimes been interpreted very perversely, and has even given rise within the Church to such offensive doctrines as that Jesus lost his faith in himself and his cause, or that God did actually desert him because of the sins of mankind. But in any case it seems to us far more probable that these words of the Messianic passion-psalm were put into the mouth of Jesus by tradition than that he really uttered them. The sequel, too, throws great suspicion on the report ; for the Jews were not allowed to approach the cross, and what did the Roman soldiers know about Elijah? Besides, if the Jews had really heard him cry “Eli !” or “Elo !” they would hardly have mistaken the words of the twenty-second Psalm for a cry to the precursor of the Messianic kingdom, — a mistake upon which their raillery is made to depend. We must, therefore, put aside these words, as in all probability unhistorical ; but, on the other hand, there is not the least reason to doubt the uniform tradition that a few moments before his death Jesus uttered a cry of pain, and that, as he was gasping almost in the death-throe, some one refreshed him by putting a sponge to his lips, dipped in the soldiers’ sour drink, — a mixture of vinegar, water, and eggs, — a cruse of which would certainly be there for the use of the sentries.¹

Only a few minutes afterwards, in the very death-struggle

¹ Compare Luke xxiii. 36; John xix. 28, 29; Hebrews v. 7.

itself, followed a second cry, which Luke interprets, again at the suggestion of a passage in a psalm,¹ as his last prayer of trust: "Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit." Then his head sunk upon his breast, a deadly pallor over-spread his face, and all was over.

The struggle was at an end; the suffering was done. Comparatively speaking, it had not been long. Jesus certainly breathed his last before sunset, and apparently soon after three in the afternoon. He had, therefore, only been upon the cross six, or at most eight, hours. But all that he had already gone through during the last few days and weeks, especially the evening, the night, and the morning that had just passed, together with the scourging and maltreatment he had undergone, and above all his intense mental suffering, had already almost completely exhausted his powers (as we saw on the way from the judgment hall), and his remaining strength fast ebb'd away. It has sometimes been supposed that the great cry he uttered at the moment of his death was caused by sudden cessation of the action of the heart, the bursting of a blood vessel in the heart or brain, or the rupture of an artery. But all this is the merest guess-work.

For us, let us confess it, it is a great relief that his sufferings were not protracted. In the midst of all the mysteries which perplex the course of human events, there is something unspeakably dark and painful in such an end to such a life. But the darkness is not unrelieved by light. Proof against the fiercest trials, unflinching when called to the supremest sacrifice, unconditionally faithful to the lofty task of his life, obedient without reserve to the holy will of his Father, Jesus did in truth lay the foundations of the kingdom of God, though far otherwise than he conceived; he did in truth bind the world to him by eternal ties of deepest obligation, and make himself the Christ. The apostolic age did well to emphasize the fact that God, when he would bring many sons to glory,—that is to the realization of their exalted and blessed destiny as men,—had made the accomplisher of their salvation rise through suffering to a spotless moral perfection, and thereby also to the highest rank in the kingdom of heaven.² For Jesus himself made perfect, and mankind bound to him with eternal ties, even that cross on Golgotha is not too high a price!

It is but natural that the imagination of the Christians in every age, even the earliest, should have seized upon this

¹ Psalm xxxi. 5.

² Hebrews ii. 10, v. 8, 9.

scene of the Master's death upon the cross ; and since the gross dishonor done to him outrages our sense of the fitness of things even now, after so many centuries, we can hardly wonder that Christian feeling early demanded some immediate compensation, some visible and instantaneous glorification of Jesus, to blot out at once the deep humiliation and shame of his execution. God's sacred protest at the murder of his Son must have taken some concrete shape ; the blessed fruits of the Lord's self-sacrifice, the glorious triumph of the rejected one over the hostile powers which seemed to have subdued him, must have found some visible expression ; and all this must have appeared in forms so palpable and overwhelming that the spectators returned from the hill with their hearts filled with reverence, while all who had been indifferent or hostile were covered with dismay and shame. Hence all those metaphors in our Gospels which became more than metaphors almost immediately ; hence those fresh lines which were constantly added to the picture of the crucifixion to make the rehabilitation of the crucified more and more complete.

Even the oldest accounts we have mention two wonders : During the last hours of the life of Jesus we are told, from noon till three o'clock, darkness came over all the earth. Perhaps the period indicated is intended to cover the whole time when Jesus was upon the cross. Now, since the Passover is always celebrated at full moon, an actual eclipse of the sun is of course out of the question ; but the symbolical significance of the story is as clear as possible. Nature herself mourned for the murder of the Messiah. The sun refused to look upon the scene of horror, and concealed his splendor while the "Light of the World" was setting. At the very moment, we are further told, when Jesus breathed his last, the heavenly adorned and embroidered tapestry that hung as a curtain between the Holy and the Holy of Holies in the temple was rent in two from top to bottom. Here also it would be absurd to look for an historic fact ; but the thought at once suggests itself, that at the death of Jesus the partition behind which the thrice Holy One withdrew from every eye in mysterious obscurity was taken away, and access to Him was made free to all :¹ while the priestly dignity was annulled, or rather made the portion of every one, and the fear of the Lord was superseded by trustful communion with the Father. In place of this, the Gospel of the Hebrews

¹ Compare Hebrews ix. 7 ff., x. 19 ff.

said that the broad and lofty threshold of the temple was broken and fell to pieces: the significance may be the same as in our Gospels, or it may perhaps mean that the temple service was annulled by the great sacrifice on Golgotha. We are also told by our oldest authorities that when the officer who stood by the cross heard the great cry with which Jesus gave up his life, he exclaimed, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" or, according to Luke, "Surely this was a righteous man!" Heathendom, face to face with the dying Christ, recognizes in all his majesty him whom his own people have rejected.

But the same path must be pursued still further. Faith demanded still more and still greater wonders. The earth trembled, says a later account in Matthew. It shuddered with horror at the deed. The rocks were cleft, and the sepulchral caves gaped open, while many bodies of long-buried saints, pious men of the olden time, patriarchs and prophets, returned to life. And after the resurrection of Jesus they left their graves and went into the City of God, and appeared to many of the people there. It was the foreshadowing of the resurrection at the last day. At the moment when Jesus, by surrendering himself freely to the very death, exalted himself to the dignity of the Messiah, he secured his triumph over the realm of shades which must ere long give up its prey at his commanding word. Here we may add that the second part of the "Gospel of Nicodemus," which is twelve chapters long, contains a detailed description, purporting to come from two eye-witnesses, of how Jesus went down into the underworld, whence he released all the saints, with Adam at their head, and conducted them to paradise. Well might the officer and sentinels be filled with dread! Nay, Luke, even without mentioning the miracle of the earthquake or of the resurrection of the dead, may well say that all the people who had streamed together to witness the execution, when they had seen all that happened, went home and smote their breasts in deepest penitence and sense of guilt.

Once more be it said, we sympathize intensely with the feeling that called these stories into being. But history has nothing to tell us of any restoration to honor taking place on Golgotha, of any special occurrence at the death of Jesus to reverse or mitigate his disgrace. His shameful end was, and continued to be, a fearful shock to his disciples, and made it simply impossible to many of the Jews and heathen to believe in him as the future Christ. There is no trace of his death

having made any impression at the time upon the people of Jerusalem or the strangers ; upon the Jews or the Romans ; upon those who witnessed or those who compassed it.

On the other hand, we have what appears to be a trustworthy account of the last honors paid by the hand of friendship to the mortal remains of Jesus.

The evening was already falling, and the Sabbath would soon begin. Should the body be left hanging on the cross ? It was the general rule among the Romans and the Greeks to deny burial to crucified offenders, and leave them as a spoil to birds of prey and other creatures. But we have already seen that the rulers complied in many respects with the usages of the subject people ; and the Jews, partly out of humanity, but chiefly to guard the country of the Lord from pollution,¹ never left any one unburied, even though he had been hanged. Indeed, strictly speaking, no body should be left hanging on the wood even for a single night, as would have occurred in this instance, owing to the rapid death of Jesus, had not one of his friends undertaken the care of his burial.

It was not one of his chosen disciples, nor one of the faithful Galilæan women, who took courage for the last service of love. It was a man whom we meet for the first and last time on this occasion, and of whom we know nothing except his name (Joseph) and his birthplace (Arimathea or Ramathaim, in the ancient territory of Ephraim). We are told that he too had joined the disciples, though probably only during the stay of Jesus in Jerusalem ; and, further, that he looked with longing for the Messianic kingdom. What a crushing sense of disappointment then must have accompanied this last sacred duty of friendship ! Perhaps Joseph was acquainted with the procurator ; at any rate, we are told that he was a rich man, and later accounts even make him one of the elders or distinguished laymen, who had a seat in the Sanhedrim : but they are careful to tell us he had taken no part in the hostile deliberations and violent measures of that body against the Nazarene. Be this as it may, no sooner had Joseph perceived or heard that the Master had breathed his last upon the instrument of torture than he asked and obtained an audience of Pilate, and begged the body of the crucified Jesus, in order that he might give it an honorable burial.

It was a bold step. How easily he might be suspected of

¹ Deuteronomy xxi. 23.

siding with the "King of the Jews," who had been condemned as a tumult-maker! And still worse, what hatred and ignominy from his own people and his own colleagues he was dragging down upon his head! But he could not let such thoughts restrain him. Jesus had inspired him with so deep a reverence that he could not suffer his mortal remains to be left hanging on the cross, and then after a while be thrust in shame into the earth. If he had been unable to rescue him, or if the sudden catastrophe had so taken him by surprise that he had not even attempted any thing, he would at least do all that still remained.

The procurator granted his request (which was probably backed, according to the custom of the time, by a considerable sum of money), and gave him a written order to the officer at Golgotha, or else despatched a messenger with him. Mark, indeed, tells us that Pilate was astonished to hear that the Nazarene was dead already; that he sent for the officer in charge, and when he learned from him that Jesus had been dead some time, granted Joseph's request. But this seems highly improbable when we consider the short space of time in which the whole transaction was completed, and the absolute necessity of the responsible man remaining on the spot at Golgotha, where the two robbers still hung alive upon the stakes.

Enough! Joseph went with a few dependants to the hill. The centre cross was loosened and laid upon the ground, the nails were drawn out, the cords cut through; and, since Golgotha at that moment was an utterly unsuitable place in which to pay due honors to the dead, the body was immediately laid in the usual open coffin. The near approach of the Sabbath would prevent all but a very few from following the coffin as it was borne to a place hard by, where Joseph possessed a sepulchre hewn out of the rock, or had obtained leave to use it on this occasion. The later tradition adds, in honor of Jesus, that it was a new sepulchre in which no one had as yet been laid.¹ Here reverent and careful hands cleansed the body from blood, wrapped the head in a napkin, and shrouded the limbs in broad strips of linen. If under any circumstances a body that had been so mangled would have been deemed suitable for embalmment, now at any rate there was no time for it. It was needless. All was done that friendship and reverence could do for him whose death was mourned with such unutterable woe, and nothing essential was wanting to the last honors paid him.

¹ See p. 361.

So now the stiffly-shrouded corpse was carefully borne into the cave, and laid in one of the niches in the side. According to Jewish wont, the mouth of the sepulchre was closed by a great stone or mass of rock, which served as a door and protected the tomb from violation by beasts of prey. This stone would be left unmoved until another corpse, belonging to the possessor's family, should be brought there likewise to its place of rest. The mournful duty was now done, and in the deep affliction of his soul the bold and faithful friend turned homeward.

Meanwhile the evening had quite set in and the Sabbath had begun. This was an hour, especially at Jerusalem, of joyous, consecrated rest. The Sabbath lamp was lighted, the Sabbath garments donned, and the Sabbath meal prepared with more than usual sumptuousness in honor of the feast and the innumerable guests. As they reclined at table, the members of the Council and many of the Pharisees besides might rehearse the day's events with a feeling of satisfaction and relief, and might thank the Lord for his mighty help and the unmistakable signs he had given them of his satisfaction with their zeal in his honor.

Outside there, by the sepulchre, all was still and cold and lonely, and yet not altogether deserted. The moonlight revealed two female forms, bent down in speechless agony, and the stillness of the night was only broken by their sobs. They were Mary of Magdala and her namesake, the faithful friends who had followed Jesus from Galilee. Had they accompanied the bier from the hill of death? Or had they not heard till later on what Joseph had been doing? There they sat now, over against that cave, and could not tear themselves away. What was not hidden there, behind that stone, for ever! What inestimable treasures destroyed by rude and wanton hands! What glorious promises dashed at once and for ever!

And we too stand with them in thought; and as we gaze upon that stone and think of him who lies behind it, conceptions and emotions rush upon the brain and heart, and force the lips to utterance. Rest sweetly from thy toilsome work, thou noble benefactor, deliverer of mankind, great son of God! Thy triumph is secure. Thy name shall be borne on the breath of the winds through all the world; and with that name no thought except of goodness, nobleness, and love shall link itself in the bosoms of thy brothers who have

learned to know thee and what thou art. Thy name shall be the symbol of salvation to the weak and wandering, of restoration to the fallen and the guilty, of hope to all who sink in comfortless despair. Thy name shall be the mighty cry of progress in freedom, in truth, in purity,—the living symbol of the dignity of man, the epitome of all that is noble, lofty, and holy upon earth. To thy name shall be inseparably bound that ideal of humanity which thou didst bring into the world, and which can never be rejected from it more. Thy life was short, yet in it thou didst more than any one of all thy brethren to uplift the lives and souls of men. And now that thou art dead, it shall be seen that they for whom thou didst give thyself up to the very death are not ungrateful. From thy cross goes forth a power which is slowly but surely regenerating the world. Thy spirit, which remains behind, shall fulfil thy task. The future is thine own. Thou great deliverer, thou monarch in the realm of truth, of love, of peace, we do thee homage!

BOOK II.

THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

MATTHEW XXVII. 62-XXVIII.; LUKE XXIV. 13-53; ACTS I.
8-14; 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 3-8.¹

SO Jesus and his cause appeared to have been finally crushed. A single vigorous and well-concerted measure had smothered the Messianic agitation. The prophet of Galilee had paid, by a malefactor's death, for his audacity in coming to Jerusalem itself to preach his gospel and unfurl his banner of freedom and of the spirit, for his heroic effort to make God's kingdom come. Who was there left to take up his task? His best disciples and his closest friends were fugitives and apostates.

Yet hopeless as things seemed to be, the unshaken confidence with which Jesus had faced his lot was justified by the event. From his momentary defeat he rose again with wider and deeper influence than ever. Were there no danger of misunderstanding, we would gladly use an expression of his own,² and speak of this as his "rising again" or "resurrection." But this word is commonly used to signify something very different from his triumph after defeat. For when the faith of the Apostles and other disciples, recovering from the shock under which at first it had tottered and collapsed, appeared once more in renovated strength, it took the form of a belief that Jesus had risen up from the dead and ascended to heaven. This is what is generally meant by the "Resurrection;" and if we were to employ the word, it might seem as though we accepted this early belief as an historical fact.

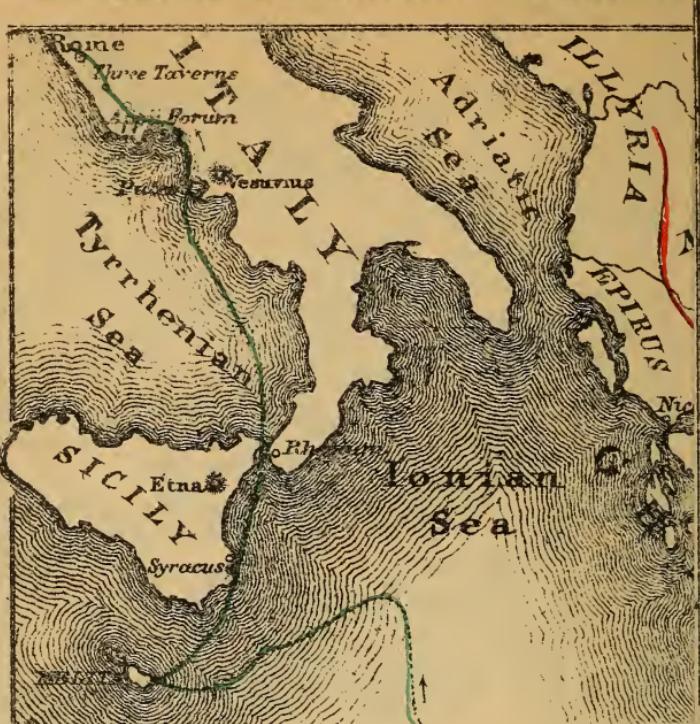
¹ Mark xvi.; Luke xxiv. 1-12.

² Compare pp. 328 f., 350.

¹ See, for instance, Revelation xx. 12-14; and compare pp. 272, 313, 387

388.

² Compare vol. i. pp. 528-531; ii. pp. 395, 396; pp. 331 ff., 378 ff.



though we accepted this early belief as an historical fact.

¹ Mark xvi. ; Luke xxiv. 1-12.

² Compare pp. 328 f., 350.

Moreover, in saying that the belief in the “resurrection” was but the form assumed by the reviving faith of the disciples, we have explained our reasons for dealing with it in our Second Book, which treats of the Apostles, instead of including it in the history of Jesus himself as the last scene of his life on earth ; for, amidst all the doubts that hang around this subject, of one thing at least we may be sure, namely, that it forms a chapter of the inner life of the disciples, not of the outward life of the Master. In other words, the resurrection of Jesus is not an external fact of history, but simply a form of belief assumed by the faith of his friends and earliest disciples.

Let us begin by considering what that word “resurrection” really meant, whether applied to Jesus or to others. Later representations, down to our own times, have regarded it as equivalent to a rising from the grave ; but the question is, what it meant in the faith and preaching of the Apostles, in the genuine, original, primitive tradition that Jesus had risen. Now, “resurrection” means elsewhere a return from the realm of shades to the human life on earth ;¹ and in like manner it was said that Jesus too had left the underworld, but not, in this case, to return at once to life upon the earth, but to be taken up provisionally into heaven. Originally the resurrection and ascension of Jesus were one. It was only later that the conception sprang up of his having paused upon earth, whether for a single day or for several weeks, on his journey from the abyss to the height.

We may therefore safely assert that if the friends of Jesus had thought as we do of the lot of those that die,² they would never have so much as dreamed of their Master’s resurrection or ascension. For to the Christian belief of to-day it would be, so to speak, a matter of course that Jesus, like all good and noble souls, — and indeed above all others, — would go straight “to a better world,” “to heaven,” “to God,” at the instant of his death ; but in the conception of the Jews, including the Apostles, this was impossible. Heaven was the abode of the Lord and his angels only ; and if an Enoch or an Elijah had been caught up there alive, to dwell there for a time, it was certain that all who *died*, without exception, even the purest and most holy, must go down as shades into the realms of the dead in the bowels of the earth, — and thence,

¹ See, for instance, Revelation xx. 12–14; and compare pp. 272, 313, 387
388.

² Compare vol. i. pp. 528–531; ii. pp. 395, 396; pp. 331 ff., 378 ff.



of course, they could not issue except by “rising again.” And this is why we are never told that Jesus rose “from death,” far less “from the grave,” but always “from the dead,” — that is, from the place where the shades of the departed abide ; from the realms of the dead. The dead, when thus waked into life again, must have a body, whether it were a new one,¹ or whether the old one left the grave for him.² Now the Apostles could not accept or endure the thought that their Master was left in the abyss a powerless and lifeless shadow, — they were convinced that he must be living in heaven in glory ; and, moreover, they believed themselves to have evidence of his continued existence. The only possible conclusion, therefore, was that he had *risen* from the realm of shades.

All this is simple enough. Is it not equally clear that where there is no belief in this realm of shades a “resurrection” has no meaning ? And if we have all ceased to believe in any such shadow-land, we are forced to admit that the narratives we are about to consider do not concern a fact in the life of Jesus, but a conception on the part of his friends, — the origin of which we must, if possible, explain.

The contradictions in the narratives themselves, though so great as to lay insuperable difficulties in the way of a literal interpretation, no longer surprise us when we know that we are dealing with a product of the religious imagination, gradually amplified and embellished by tradition.

The following story indicates the way in which the disciples rose to the belief that their Master still lived and would yet be the Christ : —

It was on the Sunday after the crucifixion that two of the disciples were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus, about two leagues distant, conversing on the way about all that had occurred. Now while they were discussing their divergent views or doubts they were joined by a third wayfarer. This was no other than Jesus himself ; but they were so blinded that they did not know him. “What are you speaking about,” he asked, “that makes you look so sad as you walk along?” “What are we speaking of?” repeated Cleopas, one of the two ; “then are you the only one among all the strangers in the Holy City that does not know what has happened there in these last days?” “What about?” he asked.

¹ See p. 272; compare 1 Corinthians xv. 50.

² See p. 457; compare John v. 28, 29.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, mighty in deed and word in the eyes of God and of all the people; and our high priests and councillors gave him up to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the promised deliverer of Israel. [And moreover this is the third day since it was done; and some of the women among us who went in the early morning to his tomb have filled us with consternation by declaring that they could not find his body there, and that they saw a vision of angels who told them he was alive. Some of our number went straightway to the spot, and found it as the women had said; but him they did not see.]" "How blind your eyes, how dull your hearts," cried Jesus, "to the predictions of the prophets! Was not this suffering the very path by which it was appointed for the Messiah to ascend his throne?" Then he went through the Law and the prophetic writings with them, and showed them in the several books all that referred to him. Thus they drew near to Emmaus, and he made as if he would go on alone. But they would not let him go. "Stay with us," they urged, "for the evening is closing in already." So he yielded to their pressure; they went in, and in a few moments they were all reclining at the evening meal. Then Jesus, taking the place of the head of the family as usual, took the bread, uttered the thanksgiving, broke it, and handed it to them. In a moment the scales fell from their eyes, they looked at one another, they looked at him,—they knew him; but at that very moment he vanished miraculously from their sight! Every doubt disappeared from their minds. "Did not our hearts burn within us," they said, "when he was speaking with us and explaining the Scriptures to us on the way?" They instantly rose up from the table and hurried back in the dark to Jerusalem. There the Eleven and the other disciples anticipated them by the exclamation, "The Lord has truly risen and appeared to Simon!"—upon which the two related, in their turn, what had happened to them on the way, and how they had recognized Jesus as he broke the bread.

The source and origin of this beautiful picture are difficult to ascertain. Luke must have accepted it literally when he took it up into the cycle of his stories of the resurrection, to which it does not properly belong;¹ but this proves nothing. Perhaps it was Luke, or perhaps some earlier narrator, who

¹ Compare Luke xxiv. 24 with verse 12, and verse 34 with verses 37 and 41, *et seq.*; and see Mark xvi. 13 b.

retouched the picture with no great skill, and added such traits, for instance, as the visit of the women and the other disciples to the tomb, which we have included in brackets. No such place as Emmaus has been found within two leagues of Jerusalem. There is an Emmaus (or Nicopolis) at a distance of six or seven leagues from the City of the Temple, but this cannot be the place intended. There is a bathing place of the same name on the Sea of Gennesareth, — and this tempts us to ask whether the scene was not originally laid in Galilee (which really witnessed the reviving faith of the disciples), and subsequently transferred to Jerusalem without change of names. Finally, we may note that Jesus appears in different places — to the two travellers and to Simon — at the same time. But in spite of all these traces of composite origin, the background and general outline of the picture still furnish us with precious materials for retracing the origin of the belief of the disciples in the resurrection ; for we must never forget that a powerful imagination, supported by the symbolical forms of expression then current, might well translate reminiscences into present facts, suspense or other emotions into external events.

The friends of Jesus — so we read this story — were bitterly disappointed in their fairest hopes by the cross of Jesus. And yet they still regarded their Master as a mighty prophet, and their hearts and mouths still overflowed with him. And while they thought and spoke of him, — at one in burning love, but often widely severed in opinions and expectations, — Jesus himself came to them. Not the glorified Christ from heaven,¹ but the Jesus they had known on earth. They did not perceive or did not notice it ; but he was there, drawn to their sides by the magic power of loving and reverent remembrance, — he was with them, speaking to them, drawing out their thoughts, and then correcting and instructing them, — until at last, in the light of the event, they began to understand his teaching of the last few weeks,² so fruitless at the time. They saw how the Scripture pointed out, in many a special utterance and in the common lot of prophets, what the sad end must be, and how the temporal defeat would lead to victory and would win the Messianic crown. When rightly looked into, the Scripture was full of hints and predictions of the event.³ How could they be so slow of heart ! They would fain prolong those moments of his presence, hardly

¹ Matthew xviii. 20, xxviii. 20.

² See pp. 326 ff., and 405.

³ Acts ii. 27, xiii. 34, 35 (Psalm xvi. 10; Isaiah lv. 3, lxx. 10; Hosea vi. 2).

realized, in the life of reminiscence, — they would not let him go! And then as they lay down to meat and broke the bread, that symbolic action on the last evening of the Master's life started back into their minds, the impression of that last meeting was renewed ; they remembered all he told them, and above all that clear announcement of his death and of his triumph ;¹ and then — the scales fell from their eyes, he was the Promised One once more ! And now he is gone from their bodily sight, — but henceforth nothing can disturb their faith. He is the Christ. He cannot be a prey to the realm of shades. He lives ! He will come again !

Are we then to understand that the friends of Jesus had visions of their departed Master which, though really but the fruit and the expression of reviving faith, were looked upon by them as conclusive proof that he had left the underworld and was living still ? We cannot be absolutely certain, but in all probability we must answer this question in the affirmative ; for we have a statement on the subject that is free from all ambiguity, and is far more ancient and more trustworthy than the great mass of stories of the resurrection. It is a passage in a letter written by Paul to the community at Corinth, in the year 58 A.D., in which he reminds them what he had told them a few years before, in accordance with what he himself had heard from eye-witnesses many years before, — not long after the death of Jesus. It was "that Christ died for the forgiveness of our sins, according to the Scripture ; and was buried and was raised up the third day, according to the Scripture ; and appeared to Cephas (Peter), and afterwards to the Twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once, most of whom are still living, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, and afterwards to all the Apostles, and last of all to me also."

Now, on the assumption that it comes from the hand of Paul, this enumeration, which evidently aims at completeness, deserves our confidence ; for Paul would certainly take care to inform himself accurately in such a matter. In speaking of the "resurrection," he does not mean the reanimation of the body of Jesus ; and indeed he expressly excludes such a thought by ascribing to the Christ a glorified and spiritual body not made of flesh and blood.² It is equally certain that he thinks of the Christ as having appeared *from heaven* ; and

¹ See pp. 407, 409.

² 1 Corinthians xv. 42-54; 2 Corinthians v. 1-4; Philippians iii. 21.

his ranking the appearance to himself,—unquestionably the product of his own fervid imagination,¹—as parallel with those which preceded it, seems to indicate that they were all visions alike. And indeed the return to earth of one already dead and glorified, or the veritable apparition of a spirit, is a thing which far transcends the limits of credibility. And, besides, we know that the Israelites, though well aware of the difference between a vision and something seen under ordinary conditions,² were yet firmly convinced that what they saw in the ecstasy of a vision had an objective reality corresponding to it.³ It may deserve our attention also that in this passage Paul first supports the faith in the resurrection of Jesus by an appeal to the Scripture,⁴ and subsequently confirms it by a *reductio ad absurdum*.⁵ In other words, he is more inclined to demonstrate that Christ *must* have risen than to build upon adequate testimony to the fact that he *had* risen.

With regard to each of the separate appearances for which the Apostle vouches, we may note that even the one witnessed by five hundred believers offers no insuperable difficulty; for when we remember how infectious the excited condition favorable to visions sometimes is, it seems far from impossible that the whole of a numerous gathering of disciples might believe themselves to see the Master. History furnishes other instances, not less striking, of a number of people in a state of spiritual exaltation seeing one and the same image before their eyes. Nor need we wonder at the preservation of the expression, “the Twelve,” though one of course was wanting. Who are meant by “all the Apostles” it is impossible to say. “James” is the brother of Jesus.

As to James, we may remark that the only other ancient authority which speaks of Jesus appearing to him is the Gospel according to the Hebrews. There it is said that when the risen Jesus had given his grave-clothes to the high priest’s servant, he showed himself to James, who had sworn after the Last Supper (at which he was not really present) that he would never eat bread again till he had seen Jesus risen from the dead. So Jesus now brought him a cake of bread, offered thanks, broke it, and gave it to him with the words: “Eat this bread, my brother; for the Son of Man has risen from the dead.” The whole story is evidently a later invention in

¹ Compare 2 Corinthians xii. 1-4.

² See, for instance, Acts ix. 7, x. 10, 11, 17, 19.

³ See 2 Kings vi. 17; 2 Corinthians xii. 3.

⁴ 1 Corinthians xv. 4: compare pp. 37 f.

⁵ 1 Corinthians xv. 12-19.

honor of James, who was held in high esteem by the community at Jerusalem.

Returning to the statement in the Epistle to the Corinthians, we observe that Peter is mentioned as the first who saw the Master. Now of course the first appearance was the really critical event. It gave the impulse; and the rest were the natural consequence of the fervent longing of all the disciples to share the privilege of him who had already seen the glorified Master. It deserves our attention therefore that both here and in the story of the journey to Emmaus Peter is mentioned before any of the others. Now Peter's fervent and excitable temperament,¹ acting upon his deep sense of the injury he had done to his beloved Master and his longing to receive assurance of forgiveness, might well throw him into just such a state of exaltation² as might make him see the form he loved rise up before him, with an expression of exalted tenderness and generous forgiveness, as a mighty incentive and a glorious consolation.³

But it ought to be mentioned that, according to another tradition preserved in our Gospels, it was not Peter, but the faithful friends who had seen Jesus die,—the two Marys, whom we left in speechless agony at the sepulchre,—to whom the first assurance was vouchsafed that their Master had arisen. It was an angel, or Jesus himself, who brought the proclamation to them (with or without their companion, Salome), and told them to carry the great news to the disciples, and especially to Peter. In itself this account is at least as credible as the other. The tried attachment and touching fidelity of these women to Jesus, working upon the more sensitive female system, would make them eminently susceptible of such impressions as we are discussing; and it seems more probable that tradition would gradually substitute Peter for the women than that they should have usurped his place. In fact we find the women, in this version of the events, specially charged to take the glad news to Peter,⁴ and may fancy that we see therein the first indication of a feeling that gradually gave the place of honor to the Apostle, to the exclusion of the women. On the other hand, great doubt is thrown upon the whole picture of the women and their vision by its un-historical setting,—representing Jerusalem as the locality, the Sunday morning as the time, and the empty tomb as the

¹ Compare p. 181.

² Compare Acts x. 10.

³ See Luke xiii. 31, 32; compare verse 61; John xxi. 15-17; and Matthew xiv. 30, 31.

⁴ Mark xvi. 7; compare John xx. 2-6.

scene of the vision ; whereas, as we shall presently see, all these three traits are of much later origin.

Paul's statement is irreconcilable with the tradition preserved in the Gospels in other points besides the question of priority between Peter and the Marys. We will therefore simply give the Gospel tradition now, without further reference to Paul's statement, and without venturing at present to pronounce decisively in favor of the latter as compared with the primitive nucleus of the former. The later traditions in the Gospels have little value.

Of course it needs the utmost circumspection to separate this primitive tradition from the various accretions of later date ; but a careful comparison of the texts generally leads us to a definite conclusion. The impression we arrive at is that the first and perhaps the only appearance of the Christ took place in Galilee, a good many days after the death of Jesus. The Eleven, once more in their native land, had met upon one of the well-known mountains, and there they saw the glorified Master. But not all of them. Some of them still doubted, still distrusted themselves or the others who bowed down in transport and did reverence to him, as he appeared to them on high.

We see at once how much there is to commend this narrative to our acceptance. It can hardly be doubted that immediately after the Master's death, if not as soon as he was taken prisoner, the disciples fled in haste from the hostile orthodoxy of Jerusalem to their own native land.¹ It was only here that they took breath and came to themselves again. It was here where they had gone in and out with him unceasingly, where every footpath and every hill-top, the fertile shores of the lake and the desolate wilderness, were alike enriched with treasured reminiscences of his wondrous and impressive preaching, of his private instruction never more to be forgotten, and his confidential intercourse with his chosen ones ; it was here where the fair days gone by, and the noble yet winning personality which shone through all their memories, rose up so vividly before their minds ; it was here that they felt the conviction gradually, not suddenly, sink deep into their souls that it was impossible he had deceived himself and them, impossible that God had suffered him to fail. Had he not himself foreseen the end before it came, yet

¹ See pp. 419, 420 ; and Matthew xxvi. 32, xxviii. 7 (Mark xiv. 28, xvi. 7).

without losing either faith or hope? And at the thought their faith and hope revived. Perhaps if we had been told that they saw him on the Sunday morning after his death, for instance, we might feel that the time was too short to allow all these influences to have their full effect. But this is not what we are told. The very fact that it was in Galilee they saw him is itself a proof that ample time intervened to admit of the power of recollection bringing them completely under the Master's influence again. The uniform tradition as to the third day refers to the time of his leaving the realms of death for heaven, not to that of his appearance to his friends. It is perhaps an inference from Scripture, and perhaps grew out of an expression used by Jesus himself, but in either case it is probably due to the misunderstanding of a proverbial expression.¹

For the rest, it is hardly necessary, after all that we have said, to point out that when once the faith of the disciples was restored, it must necessarily take the form of the belief in the Master's resurrection or glorified existence; and that it is, to say the least of it, exceedingly comprehensible that some of them in a state of transport should have seen him. That some of them were in doubt and were only subsequently swept down the stream of general conviction appears to us a genuine historical trait, and it never quite disappears from the later stories.² Finally, we may observe that the provisional assumption of Jesus into heaven, where he would at once receive from God the office of Messiah in anticipation of his return to earth, was needed to satisfy the demand of the disciples for their Master's complete restoration from the shame of his death upon the cross.³

Their joyful certainty that Jesus was now exalted to his kingly rank found utterance in the words which they put into his mouth; first the declaration, "To me is given all power in heaven and upon earth;" then the command, "Go forth to make all peoples my disciples, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" and finally the promise, "Lo! I am with you in your labor, day by day, till I return to crown you." A later tradition, preserved in the spurious conclusion of Mark,⁴ represents Jesus as appearing to the disciples, when assembled in a certain chamber, and uttering these three sayings in the

¹ See pp. 275, 328; Hosea vi. 2; Matthew xii. 40, *et seq.*

² Mark xvi. 11, 13, 14; Luke xxiv. 11, 37, 41; John xx. 27.

³ Acts ii. 36.

⁴ Mark xvi. 9-20.

following form: "Go out into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. And whoever believes and is baptized [that is to say, openly avows his faith] shall be saved, but whoever believes not shall be condemned, at the Messianic judgment. And miraculous powers shall always wait on faith, such as the power to cast out devils in my name; to speak in fresh tongues; to take serpents in the hand; to drink poison without being hurt; to lay hands on the sick and heal them." The primitive symbolical significance of this promise still shines through the words;¹ but here they are taken literally, after the manner of the Apocryphal Gospels.²

The command about baptism has gained such importance as to justify a moment's delay to consider it. That Jesus never directly enjoined the Twelve to call the heathen to a share in the privileges of the Golden Age is above all doubt;³ and this saying must therefore be of comparatively late origin, dating from a period at which the mission to the heathen was not only fully recognized, but even declared to have originated with the Twelve. A moment's reflection makes it obvious that Jesus himself instituted no such ceremony as baptism to incorporate converted Jews and heathen into a community of future members of the kingdom of God, and if further evidence be wanted it is supplied by Paul.⁴ On the other hand, the rise of such a practice in the community, perhaps at a very early period, is perfectly natural; and so, too, the much later custom of baptizing the infant children of Christians, though not even remotely contemplated in the injunction we are now considering, is easy to understand, and enlists our perfect sympathy. Baptism into the name of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, means baptism into the confession of or faith in these three, and is a short epitome of Christian doctrine of which Jesus certainly never dreamed; nay, it is obvious from all accounts that, even in the apostolic age, it was as yet quite unknown;⁵ and the still later age which drew up the words by no means intended them as a baptismal formula, but rather as a statement of the conditions of admission into the community. In making the utterance of these words, instead of the imposi-

¹ See Luke x. 19.

² Acts v. 16, viii. 7, xvi. 18, ii. 4, x. 46, xix. 6, xxviii. 5, 8.

³ See pp. 293, 294; Galatians ii. 7-9; Acts x., xi.

⁴ 1 Corinthians i. 17.

⁵ Acts ii. 38, viii. 16, x. 48, xix. 5; Romans vi. 3; 1 Corinthians i. 13, 15; Galatians iii. 27.

tion of these conditions, the first act of admission into the community of Christ, the Church has confounded words with things. In a word, the phenomenon we are now considering is compounded of a remarkable perversion of a Biblical phrase and an expression of the religious sense of Christendom, which is equally simple and deserving of respect.

In general we may be pretty sure that the oldest tradition, whether preserved in the Epistle to the Corinthians or in Matthew, knew nothing of any words pronounced by the risen Christ when he appeared. All these belong to the later transformations of the story, and form but one of many deviations and accretions. In fact, the original story is gradually disguised past all recognition. The appearances of Jesus are transferred to Jerusalem, obviously with the view of making the scene of the Messiah's defeat that of his restoration and triumph also; they are placed upon the third day, as taking place while Jesus passed on high from the shadow-land; they are robbed of their true character and become more and more material, after the general manner of legends. A variety of special occasions, circumstances, and sayings were from time to time added, unconsciously or by design, till the whole was expanded into a second life upon earth of several weeks' duration. Setting the two or three divergent accounts side by side as we go along, let us listen to the story!

The compulsory rest of the Sabbath was over. Before the Saturday night was gone (or early on Sunday morning) the two Marys (with or without Salome, or Salome and Johanna and others) went through one of the city gates to visit the tomb, to sit once more¹ in mournful contemplation by the cave in which so much that was dear to them lay buried, or to bear the corpse from its resting place and embalm it with spices and balsam that they had bought as soon as ever the Sabbath closed (or had provided just before it began). If they cherished such a purpose as this they remembered anxiously upon the way that they had no one with them who could roll away the heavy stone that stood at the entrance of the cave. But their anxiety was groundless; for when they looked they found that the stone was moved away already. Then they went in, and there to the right they saw a young man sitting in a long white robe (or two men in shining garments) who said to them, in their bewilderment

¹ See p. 460.

and terror, ‘ Be not afraid ! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here ! He has risen ! Come and see the place where they laid him ! Now make all speed and go to his disciples, and above all to Peter, and tell them that he will go before you to Galilee, where you will see him, as he told you.’’ In one of the accounts the words are expanded thus : ‘‘ Why look for the living among the dead ? Remember how, when he was still in Galilee, he told you that the Son of Man must be given up into the power of the heathen and be crucified, and must rise again on the third day.’’ Then, it is added, they remembered the words that he had spoken. Here Galilee, as the appointed place of meeting, has dropped out.

With their feet winged with terror, but also with great joy, they hurried from the cave to take the news to the disciples (or according to another account they were too much overcome to say a word to any one ; or according to a third, they told it all to the Apostles and the other disciples who only thought it an idle tale). And Peter ran to the sepulchre, and, stooping down, saw the shrouding clothes lying there, and went home full of amazement.

It is quite superfluous to analyze this story, the improbabilities of which we can see growing as it were before our very eyes. Compare, for instance, the simple visit to the tomb rerecorded by Matthew, with the impossible embalming of a mutilated corpse six-and-thirty hours after death, suggested by Mark and Luke.¹ Only a single word about the empty grave. This trait undoubtedly belongs to the later tradition. But it has been asked : When the Apostles had seen Christ, would they not go to Jerusalem to make sure whether the Master had really left his grave ? Not at all. It would never occur to them. The appearance of Christ would itself fill them with a joyful certainty. And such an examination of the sepulchre would be revolting to all the feelings of the age, to say nothing of the fact that the body would no longer be capable of recognition. And above all their belief in the resurrection of Jesus, like the belief of Paul subsequently, stood in no immediate connection with the condition of his mortal body. So too when Herod feared that John had risen again, he never dreamed of ordering a search to ascertain whether the head and body of his victim were still lying where they had been buried. The legend of the empty grave rose up either to confute those who denied

¹ See p. 459.

the resurrection of Jesus by a palpable proof,¹ or else under the influence of the section of Jewish-Christians who thought that at the resurrection the bodies in the graves would come to life again;² in either case it is one of the indications of the increasingly material conception gradually formed of the resurrection.

It was subsequently said that the two Marys, as they hastened from the grave to bear the angels' message to the disciples, met Jesus, who greeted them, and when they fell down and embraced his feet said to them, "Be not afraid; go and tell it to my brothers [the Apostles], that they may go to Galilee. There they will see me!" This story evidently forms a transition. The real revelation upon which the stress is laid still takes place in Galilee; but here, for the first time, a preliminary revelation is vouchsafed in Jerusalem, and that apparently between the resurrection and the ascension. Such, at any rate, is the intention of the following story, of still later origin and of very obvious purport:

The disciples were together, speaking of their faith and doubt, their hope and fear, when suddenly Jesus himself stood among them, with a greeting of peace upon his lips. They were in terror and alarm, thinking they saw a ghost; but he said, "Why are you dismayed, and why are you in doubt? Look at my hands and feet, for it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a spirit has no flesh and bones, as you can see I have." And now they could not believe it for joy, and were still lost in wonder; but he said, "Have you nothing to eat here?" upon which they gave him some broiled fish and a piece of honeycomb, which he ate before their eyes.

Then he said: "So now all that I told you before we were parted has come to pass; namely, that every thing written concerning me in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he made them understand the true meaning of the Scripture, and said: "Thus it is written that the Christ must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; and that, in the proclamation of his exaltation and return, repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all peoples, beginning with Jerusalem. And this preaching is your task. And behold I make the gift which my Father promised come down upon you! Do you then remain in the city till you are girt with power from above."

¹ See pp. 479, 480.

² See Matthew xxii. 28, xxvii. 52, 64; John v. 28, 29.

Then he led them out to the road to Bethany. There he raised his hands and blessed them ; and, as he blessed them, he passed away and was taken up into heaven. Then they bowed down to earth, and returned to Jerusalem filled with joy that he was glorified ; and there they remained continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

The meaning of this story may be gathered from the closing scene. It represents Jesus as appearing to his friends when passing from the shadow-land to the abode of God. We must therefore place it on the third day, — the Sunday, — and probably in the morning, not long after the resurrection ; for the interview itself, including the explanation of the Scripture, would occupy some hours, and it must have been over before evening, since the Evangelist can hardly intend to represent the Master as leading out his disciples, and himself going up on high, in the darkness of the night. We make this remark because, when we read the last chapter of Luke straight through, the insertion of the story of the travellers to Emmaus makes it appear as if all these events took place in the depth of night. In other respects the second part of our story is not without value ; but the introduction, with its wounds in the hands and feet, its flesh and bone, its fish and honeycomb, is an attempt to give a palpable and grossly material proof of the resurrection of Jesus. Thus the original conception is obliterated, every thing that could remind us of a vision has disappeared, and there is not a trace of the supersensual character which would naturally have marked all intercourse with a glorified one.

Presently the round number of forty days was fixed upon as the period during which the risen Master remained on earth, so as to allow for all the appearances mentioned by tradition taking place before the ascension. During this period it is expressly said that he ate and drank with his friends ! We are further told in the Acts that during these days he gave his disciples absolute proof of his continued existence, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God. He told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what God had promised them by his mouth ; for, in contrast with John's baptism of water, they should soon receive the baptism of the spirit. The disciples asked, " Master ! has the time now come for you to restore to Israel its independence, power, and glory, such as it had in the age of David and Solomon ? " " It is not given you to know the time and opportunity which the Father has reserved to himself," was the reply ; " but you

shall be strengthened when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judæa and Samaria, even to the ends of the earth." While he thus spoke he was taken up on high before their eyes, and a cloud enveloped him and carried him away out of their sight. As they were still gazing into heaven where he disappeared, two figures robed in white stood by them and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand and gaze into the heavens? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you on high, shall come back in the same manner as ye have seen him go." Then the Eleven went back from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, and remained in their upper chamber, of one mind with each other, persevering in prayer, together with certain women and the mother and brothers of Jesus.

This isolated and very late tradition is out of harmony with all the earliest accounts, which have nothing to tell us of a separate ascension; nor does it agree with the narrative in Luke, the only other passage in which the ascension is spoken of. It is on the strength of this tradition that the Church observes the Thursday, forty (thirty-nine) days after Easter Sunday, as Ascension Day; but it does not appear that this tradition was commonly accepted in the second century, for in the Epistle of Barnabas¹ we read: "We [Christians] celebrate [not the seventh day as the Jews do but] the eighth [that is the first] day with thankful joy, as the day on which Jesus rose from the regions of the dead, revealed himself to his friends, and ascended to heaven."

The importance of the subject has induced us to go in some detail into all these later and utterly unhistorical elaborations and perversions of the apostolic faith in the resurrection; and we have therefore fallen into some danger of losing sight of the real religious meaning and the original significance of that faith itself. We must therefore once more call to mind that, under the conceptions of the universe and the religious doctrines current at the time, this idea of Jesus rising out of the realm of shades was the necessary form, and nothing but the form, under which the Apostles expressed their moral certainty that their Master lived and had been exalted. It was this certainty itself, — which is ours as much as it was theirs, — that forms the essence and the glory of their faith. Above all, we must never forget what a triumph won by Jesus over the prejudices of his disciples' hearts this belief represented

¹ See p. 22.

It shows that he had so impressed them with his unequalled moral greatness and glory as to make them say : “ Though dead, he cannot be a lifeless shade ; he must still live, although alone of all that ever died. The realm of shades cannot retain him captive ; and until the time shall come for him to mount his throne on earth, he must abide in heaven.” Nay, think ! He died as a malefactor, as a disgrace to humanity, renounced by God and man. His disciples’ fairest hopes were annihilated, and they must throw away their faith in him. . . . And yet they *could* not ! Hardly had they recovered from the first bewilderment of that crushing blow when they felt and knew that they *could* not have been deceived in him ; that he *must* be the Lord of the Messianic kingdom, the hope of all the faithful, the blessed dispenser of God’s most glorious gifts,—for he *could* be no less ! For the shame of the cross God had amply compensated him with the glory of heaven ; and what the unbelief of his nation had hitherto prevented him from doing and being, he would ere long accomplish and make plain. For by him and by no other must the Golden Age most surely come. Nay, so mighty was his influence, even after his death, that in moments of holy transport his disciples even saw him. Truly, if we may argue from the effect to the cause, from the impression Jesus made to his own personality, we are filled with wondering reverence and admiration to think what he must have been ! How much higher the tribute we pay to Jesus by thus explaining the belief in his resurrection, than by wasting our strength in the hopeless effort to prop up the belief that his body came back to life and left its grave on the third day ! Were it only at the price of such a miracle that his disciples could regain their faith, our lofty estimate of his power over them, of his moral influence and his moral force, of the personality from which they issued, would lose one of its great supports.

Here then at the close we may speak, as we could not speak at first, of the “resurrection” of Jesus,—using the word as he himself employed it, to signify his triumph. There is still one story of the resurrection which we have not given, and which stands in no connection with the rest. In its present form it is a very late tradition, yet it strikes us as setting forth in emblematic guise the triumph of Jesus over the very powers which had trampled him in the dust. Let us listen to it :—

Hardly had the Saturday morning broken when a numerous deputation of high priests and Pharisees again begged audience

of the procurator. What makes them so restlessly uneasy? Have they not just averted the dangers which were threatening their religion and their people? Have they not established their own influence and authority more firmly than ever? Is not their enemy crushed for ever? The evening before, their hearts were light and they held their feast in joyful triumph. But dread forebodings rose once more at night, and banished sleep, — forebodings that some way, they knew not how, the Nazarene would hold his own against them yet. But counsel comes by night, and they soon decided what to do. And this was why the early morning found them at the palace of the Roman. They were at once admitted, and explained their fear and their request as follows: "Will it please you, we have remembered that this deceiver, when he was alive, said, 'After three days I shall rise again.' Give orders then that the grave be guarded for three days, or may be his disciples will come and steal him away and then say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead.' And then the last deceit would be worse than the first."

With unhesitating alacrity Pilate granted the request. "A sufficient watch is at your service. Guard the grave as securely as you may." They thanked him and retired. Then they hastened to their work. They placed a strip of linen across the stone at the entrance of the tomb, and secured it at both ends with clay bearing the impress of their seal. Surely no one would dare to break it! Then they left the watch with strict injunctions to vigilance, — injunctions which relieved their own minds, though the admirable discipline of the Roman system rendered them quite superfluous. Surely they might now be perfectly at rest!

The first pale gleam of the third morning was breaking from the east; the guards were standing at the entrance of the cave, — when suddenly the earth began to rock and tremble! Is that a flash of lightning shooting down from heaven? Ah, no! It is an angel of the Lord, whose appearance shines like the fire of heaven, and whose garments glitter like snow. With a touch of his finger he rolls back the stone from the mouth of the tomb and seats himself upon it as his throne. There is the seal all broken! There are the sentries, motionless and powerless in their terror, paralyzed with apprehension, without power of speech or thought, gazing with ashy faces on the apparition! No sooner had they recovered the use of their limbs than they fled for their very lives to Jerusalem to those who had given them their charge. The San-

hedrim assembled in utter consternation. The case seemed hopeless ; but these high priests and elders were never at a loss. They gave the soldiers a great sum of money and said, “Spread it about that his disciples came and stole him away while you were asleep. Should the procurator hear about it, we will find means of appeasing him, and you have no need to fear.” The soldiers took the money and repeated their lesson to every one they could get hold of. And that is the origin of the lying story of the theft.

Was such a foolish report really circulated among the Jews ? In any case this story, which is worked out elaborately in the “Gospel of Nicodemus,” is quite absurd. Is it likely that the enemies of Jesus would have heard a prophecy of his rising again when his very friends never dreamed of it for a moment, and when he had never once spoken of his “resurrection” in public ? Is not the conduct here ascribed to the councillors and the soldiers — the latter of whom would have needlessly exposed themselves to the heaviest punishment — so clumsy and childish as to be impossible ? But once set aside these difficulties and accept the picture as emblematic, and how fine and true its strokes appear ! The powers of Church and State have combined against the Nazarene and brought him to his fall. On the one side the high priests and Pharisees defending the Law, the temple, and last, not least, their own authority and influence, against the sacrilegious blows of this seducer of the people ; on the other side, the procurator, who cherishes no personal hostility to him, but overcomes his own indifferent toleration, and sacrifices the Nazarene in the interests of order. The new religious movement is crushed for ever by this combination. Both Church and State combine to keep it down. They take measures which cannot fail. The one puts its seal upon the stone, the other sets its watch before the grave, — in vain ! As by the finger of God the seal is broken and the watch is smitten down. Jesus stands up ! Though hurled to the ground, he rises again ; his momentary defeat was but a step to his abiding triumph. The alliance of ecclesiastical and civil authorities is powerless against the truth, against the kingdom of God, against the Christ. The triumph is his !

In the following pages we shall trace the history of this triumph in the establishment of the apostolic community and the preaching of the gospel to the heathen. This triumph has its witnesses in every age, in our age, in our hearts, whenever the principles of Jesus vanquish the obstinate re-

sistance of routine and prejudice, of impurity and selfishness ; whenever his ideal conquers the commonplace reality. Of this triumph every Easter that Christians observe is the grateful record and the joyful promise.

In this, the truest sense, "Christ is arisen" indeed !

CHAPTER II.

THE COMMUNITY AT JERUSALEM.

Acts I. 15-V., XII. 1-23.¹

A VEIL of obscurity hangs over the short period which separates the death of Jesus from the work of Paul. Only two facts shine through it. Of the first we have already spoken, and its significance will become still clearer presently. It is that the followers of Jesus regained their faith in his Messianic dignity, — which faith took the form of a belief that he had risen from the regions of the dead, and had been exalted to heaven, whence he would soon return. The second fact which now demands our attention is that a community of believers was formed at Jerusalem, and had its branches in other parts of the Holy Land. But with regard to this matter our curiosity is rather excited than satisfied ; for the accounts we possess are very meagre, and at the same time far from trustworthy ; and since we have no means of controlling them, we must use all the greater caution in accepting what they tell us. Not only is the length of the period in question unknown ; not only are we left completely in the dark as to many details, — but even the great facts and the general course of events are far from clear. We are, therefore, driven to suppositions which we cannot really substantiate, and of which we must consequently be very sparing.

The first question that forces itself upon us is, How came the disciples of Jesus to establish themselves at Jerusalem ? It is true that we need not suppose any collective emigration on a large scale to have taken place ; but nevertheless it is true that at a certain period, not long after the Master's death, a certain number of disciples, whose example was

¹ Matthew xxvii. 3-10

soon followed by others, felt it their duty to leave their beloved and entrancing country, their nearest relatives, and their several callings, and go and settle in the hostile capital. Unquestionably this movement was made with a view to the establishment of the kingdom of God at the approaching return of the Christ. “The City of the Lord” was the natural centre of the glories of this future age; and moreover Jesus himself had made it the scene of his last labors, and of that sublime effort frustrated, alas! by the unbelief of the people.¹ But a step that required such courage and involved such sacrifices² as the removal to Jerusalem did would hardly be undertaken except on some definite occasion and with some definite object. As to the occasion we cannot find even a hint in the book of Acts, which never lets the Apostles return to Galilee at all.³ Their object was probably something more than to wait at Jerusalem in longing for the Messiah; it was to prepare for and if possible hasten his return by taking up his work, by preaching the kingdom of God to Israel in a city which might well be deemed the nation’s heart.

We find the number of the disciples given as about one hundred and twenty souls; but this figure raises our suspicion by being just ten times the number of the tribes and of the Apostles, and it is rendered still more doubtful by the fact that we have already heard of five hundred brethren in the Epistle to the Corinthians. The statement that the mother and brothers of Jesus were among the believers approves itself more readily to our acceptance, for the Epistle just referred to mentions that the Christ appeared to James, who was probably the head of the family. It would be extremely interesting to know when and how their disbelief was overcome;⁴ for we must take the vision not as the cause but as the result of James’s faith. But our search for further light on this point is fruitless.

The first step which the band of disciples took, before the outside world knew any thing of its existence, is said to have been the selection of an Apostle to take the place of Judas. Of course the traitor had lost his place among the Twelve for ever; but beyond that we are told that the divine vengeance had already fallen upon him. Various traditions were current on this point. In the first place we hear that within a few hours of the consummation of his crime, when he saw his Master condemned to death by the Sanhedrim and handed

¹ See pp. 326, 327.

² See p. 476.

³ See pp. 345, 331, 187 ff.

⁴ Compare pp. 237-241.

over to the Roman governor, he came to himself. He saw (too late, alas!) the enormity of his crime, and could think of nothing but returning to the Sanhedrim — as if that would avail! — and giving them back the thirty shekels, the price of blood, which burned in his hands. “I have sinned,” he cried, “in giving up an innocent man to death!” But they would not take the money back; and answered dryly, “That is your affair, not ours!” Then the wretched man fell a prey to despair. He rushed into the temple, flung the coins upon the floor, went out and hanged himself. The high priests, as scrupulous as ever, considered what they could do with the money. As the price of blood, it could not be thrown into the treasury.¹ Finally they determined to purchase the Potter’s Field with it, and make it a burial place for strangers. Hence the name Hakeldama, or *Blood-acre*, was given to this field, which lay south of Sion, in the valley of Hinnom.²

Another legend, embodied in the account of the selection of a new Apostle, brings this same burial ground into connection with Judas in an equally arbitrary, though quite a different manner. According to this version he had bought a piece of land for the price of his treachery, and had subsequently come to a miserable end there, though not by his own hand. He had fallen down, his bowels had burst asunder, and his blood, that streamed over his newly-acquired possession, gave it the name it subsequently bore. A third tradition, not contained in the Bible, told how the wretched man was tortured by a fearful dropsy; how his body swelled until at last a cart could easily pass through a space too narrow for him to go through; and how, after nameless agonies, he died, stock blind, whether crushed by a cart, or a loathsome victim of disease.

We feel at once that these stories are without historical foundation, though, for the honor of humanity, we would willingly accept as true the account of Judas’s repentance. The general purport of the stories is determined by the Jewish belief in retribution, while the details are furnished by misapplied passages of the Old Testament, — the story of Ahithophel, who betrayed David;³ the prophecies of the earliest Zechariah⁴ (not Jeremiah, as the first Evangelist says);⁵ and above all the cursing psalms, one of which speaks of a snare, a desecrated inheritance, and darkened

¹ See p. 394.

² See Map IV.

³ See vol. ii. p. 49.

⁴ See pp. 410, 411.

⁵ Matthew xxvii. 9.

eyes;¹ another of an early death, deposition from a post of honor, and a curse that penetrates like water into the enemy's bowels.² As a matter of fact, we are wholly ignorant as to what befell Judas.

Let us return then to the faithful disciples at Jerusalem. We are told that Peter stood up one day among the brethren, who were about a hundred and twenty in number, and after showing that the Scripture foretold the fearful fate of the betrayer, and that another should take his place, urged the appointment of a successor. The choice must fall on one who, with the Twelve, had been a faithful and steadfast follower of Jesus from the baptism of John to the ascension of the Master; one who might join the elder Apostles in bearing testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. Then the assembly selected two of its members who fully complied with all the conditions laid down, and whose spirit and power fitted them for so sublime a task. They were Joseph, the son of Sabbas, surnamed "the just," and Matthias. The choice between these two they determined to leave to the Omniscient, and so had recourse to lots. After offering a prayer to God, the knower of hearts, that he would show them whom he had chosen to take the place of the castaway, they drew a lot for each of the two; and the result was that Matthias was received into the apostolic circle.

The Apostolate is here represented as a definite office of superintendence conferred on a certain number of men, who form a close college, and are the only qualified witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus; and this may well lead us to suspect that the whole story is invented,³ with the specific purpose of showing that there was no vacancy for Paul in the college, and that moreover he was entirely incompetent and unsuited for the post of an Apostle, inasmuch as he had not been a follower of Jesus during his public ministry. If this is really what the story means, then the writer of Acts must have simply accepted the tradition without understanding its drift. In itself, however, apart from the legend of Judas and the citation of texts connected with it; apart from the whole discourse of Peter, the fictitious character of which is palpable at the first glance,⁴ — apart, in a word, from all the accessories, it is not impossible that the number of twelve was again completed by the choice of Matthias; and a certain amount of probability is given to the supposition by the fact

¹ Psalm lxix. 22 (Matthew xxvii. 5), 25 (Acts i. 18-20), 23.

² Psalm cix. 8, 18.

³ See p. 180.

⁴ Acts i. 18, 19.

hat the first Epistle to the Corinthians¹ and the book of Revelation² both speak of “the Twelve,” notwithstanding that Judas had fallen away. This measure, if really taken, displays a scrupulous anxiety to keep in harmony with the number of the tribes, and evinces the Jewish narrowness, which regarded the blessings of the kingdom of God as reserved exclusively for Israel; but it also shows a settled determination, which earns our admiration by the courage and fidelity it reveals, of standing up before the people of the Lord, without loss of time, as witnesses to the Messiah, who was now exalted in heaven and would soon return in his glory.

When and how did the Apostles begin their preaching of Jesus, the Messiah, and of his kingdom? The following story is given us in answer: —

The day of Pentecost, the harvest thanksgiving of the Jews, had come. The disciples were together in their usual place of assembly, in the morning, when suddenly a sound was heard from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and all the house re-echoed, while at the same time they saw tongues, as if of fire, which split up and came down on each of them. At the same moment that which the wind and fire did but represent as symbols came itself to pass. The Holy Spirit came down upon them, and for a time they were utterly carried away by it; and, as indicated by those forms upon their heads, began to speak with other tongues, according as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This miracle made a deep impression. Crowds of Jews were collected to the spot, and among them were foreigners from all the nations upon the earth, whose zeal had brought them away from their heathen birthplaces to settle in the City of the Temple. Picture their amazement when each one of them (fifteen nations are enumerated) recognized his own native language in the rapturous utterances of these men! They asked in consternation, “Are not all the speakers men of Galilee? Then how comes it that each one of us hears them rehearse God’s mighty deeds in his own native language?” But while some were lost in amazement and perplexity, wondering what this could mean, others mocked the inspiration of the disciples and said: “They are full of sweet wine!”

Did these reckless taunts reach the disciples and bring them to themselves? At any rate they rose; and Peter, as

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 5.

² Revelation xxi. 14.

their head and representative, solemnly began his first discourse, amid perfect silence. They were not drunk, he exclaimed, for who would drink before nine o'clock, the hour of morning prayer? But this that they had seen was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy,¹ that before the coming of God's kingdom the Lord would pour out his spirit over young and old, men and women, after which terrible signs and wonders in heaven would follow, and then the day of judgment. Then there would be no salvation except in calling on the name of the Messiah. Now this Messiah, whose approach these signs had shown to be close at hand, was no other than Jesus of Nazareth. He had been marked out by God as filling this high rank by the miraculous powers given him; and yet more by his resurrection, when Israel under God's will had given him up to the heathen to be crucified. This resurrection proved him to be the great son of David,² upon whom his ancestor's thoughts were really fixed when he sang of his deliverance from the realms of the dead and from corruption.³ And, lastly, this pouring out of the holy gift which God had promised proved beyond contradiction that Jesus was now the Messiah, provisionally exalted to God's right hand, in accordance again with a prophetic song of David.⁴

The assembled people were deeply impressed by this address, and asked, in response to its appeal, what they were to do. Upon which Peter resumed: "Repent and be baptized as believers in Jesus, the Messiah, for the remission of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For yours is the Messianic kingdom with all its blessings, yours and your children's; and all the heathen, who by God's grace shall be taken into Israel, shall share it with you." Great was Peter's rejoicing; for when he had once more earnestly admonished his hearers to separate themselves from their stiff-necked contemporaries, that they might not share their condemnation, no fewer than three thousand announced their conversion, and were baptized on that same day!

Well-grounded objections may be urged against the credibility of this account. The signs which accompany the lofty inspiration of the disciples betray themselves at once as products of the imagination of the Christian community. Conscious of possessing the Holy Spirit, conscious of owing

¹ Joel ii. 28-32; compare vol. ii. pp. 454, 455

² Psalm cxxxii. 11.

³ Psalm xvi. 8-11; compare vol. i. p. 210.

⁴ Psalm cx. 1.

it to the risen Master, the community of Jesus imagined that the gift must have been imparted at some definite moment,¹ whether at Pentecost, or, as another account would have it, on the still earlier occasion of one of the appearances of the Christ.² Round this conception the outward symbols of the manifestation would readily cluster. Nor is it strange that the first revelation or working of the Spirit should be made to consist in speaking with other tongues; that is to say, with other than the usual tongues,—with human tongues touched by God, in a burst of religious ecstasy. This phenomenon, which is the counterpart of the ancient “prophesying,”³ is known to us from Paul’s description⁴ as an attempt to give utterance to religious transport, without using the understanding, in broken sentences, incoherent exclamations, and inarticulate sounds; sometimes it would take the form of exalted praise, which could only find expression in cries of joy and sighs. We also gather that the phenomenon appeared repeatedly in the apostolic communities, and that it was very highly esteemed. What more natural than that tradition should make it the first sign of life in the assembly of the faithful? We may note in this connection that the Book of Acts mentions the phenomenon on several other occasions, and always to mark the beginning of a genuine and formal entrance into the Messianic community.⁵ But in the passage we are now discussing this “speaking with tongues” is designedly represented as consisting in the use of all manner of foreign words, as a symbol that the gospel was destined for all peoples. This brought the legend into agreement not only with a Jewish tradition, that when the voice of God proclaimed the Law from Mount Sinai it sounded as if the words were uttered in every language of the world, but also with the expectation that in the Messianic age the confusion of tongues and division of mankind that had reigned since the building of the tower of Babel would be superseded by the original unity of language and universal peace. Finally, the closing portions of the story seem no more historical than what precedes. Peter’s discourse, like the other speeches in this book, is simply invented for him by the author in accordance with the usual custom of the time;⁶ nor can we well believe that his first discourse resulted in a conversion in mass and the baptism of three thousand

¹ Compare pp. 118, 119.

³ See vol. i. p. 453.

⁵ Acts x. 44 ff., xix. 1 ff., viii. 15 ff.

² John xx. 22.

⁴ 1 Corinthians xii.-xiv.

⁶ See pp. 23, 24.

people in a single day. We shall observe the same exaggeration in stating numbers upon other occasions, when we shall hear of five thousand and afterwards of many tens of thousands of conversions.¹

We need not even suppose that our story rests upon the reminiscence of any one particular fact, such as the common transport of the disciples spoken of as the appearance of the Christ to five hundred brethren.² The birth of the community of Jesus is buried in obscurity, and it may very well have taken place at Jerusalem by gradual and imperceptible degrees. Afterwards, when the very natural desire to fix some special day for it arose, the feast of Pentecost presented itself as the first national festival after the fatal Passover; and if that day had already come to be regarded as the commemoration of the giving of the Law, which it certainly was in later times, then as the festival of the old dispensation it would seem pre-eminently suitable for the introduction of the new. In a word, after all the reservations we have been obliged to make, we find very little of this story left unchallenged; but we must not forget that this little is the kernel of the whole,—the one fact of inestimable significance that a community of believers did actually spring up; to which we may safely add that in its early youth this community already numbered among its characteristics those bursts of inspiration known as “speaking with tongues.”

But whether it began as a close community to which no one was admitted without solemn consecration, and how the practice of baptism arose, we cannot tell. Jesus did not institute the ceremony in question. Some have supposed, though on insufficient grounds, that it was first introduced in the case of converted heathen, and therefore a good deal later than the time we are now discussing. If, on the other hand, it was really established at Jerusalem at an earlier period, and for the benefit of Jews who joined the community of the Messiah, then it was obviously borrowed from John.³ In fact the whole work of the Twelve was an imitation of that of John, and bears testimony to the strength of his influence. Properly speaking the Apostles were not carrying on the work of Jesus, but that of his predecessor,—not only inasmuch as they plunged the future citizens of the kingdom of God beneath the purifying waters, but in the exclusive prominence they gave to the last judgment, and in their preaching of the speedy and sudden dawn of the Messianic age.

¹ Acts xxi. 20.

² See pp. 467, 468.

³ See p. 104.

Now let us return for a moment to Peter's discourse. It is given us as a specimen of the primitive apostolic preaching, and as such it certainly deserves our confidence. The same may be said of a second discourse, put into the mouth of Peter, which we shall presently hear, and which resembles the first pretty closely in its general purport and contents as well as in the occasion of its delivery and its handling of the subject.¹ Three points at once excite our observation. This preaching does not concern Jesus, the hero of faith, the friend of man, the noble rescuer of humanity, whose obedience and love culminated in his death upon the cross. Far from it! It concerns Israel's Messiah, approved as the Messiah by his resurrection, in spite of his death upon the cross in shame. On the strength of Psalm cx., which Jesus himself, though with quite a different intention, had already applied to the Messiah,² he was declared henceforth to be sitting "on the right hand of God" in heaven. Not only was this the highest place of honor, but it assured him the widest power of protecting and blessing his friends and opposing and subduing his enemies during the initial establishment of his kingdom upon earth. Finally, here and everywhere the warp and weft of the apostolic teaching, which also forms the substance of several of the books of the New Testament, consists in the belief that the end of the world was now really and truly close at hand; that the "last days" had already come; and that very soon Jesus would return from heaven, then for the first time coming in his true Messianic character.

To that consummation the breathless longing of his friends was directed; in that expectation they so toiled for him that nothing could terrify or dishearten them. Little as they had understood their Master, they nevertheless clung to him faithfully, and bore enthusiastic witness to his exaltation. Amidst all their mistakes and all their narrowness, their faith and courage do them immortal honor.

Be the how and the when what they may, a body of believers in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah shortly to be expected was, as a fact, established at Jerusalem, where it constantly increased. Its members, in after years at any rate, were known by the nickname of "Nazarenes," after the birthplace of their Messiah. We have a right, derived not only from the subsequent course of events, but from the very earliest accounts, to call this body of believers a *com-*

¹ See pp. 494, 495.

² See pp. 383, 384.

munity. Let us see what is told us of its internal condition or communal life.

The believers, so we read, displayed unflagging interest in the preaching of the Apostles and unremitting zeal in prayer for the coming of the Messianic kingdom. So far from cherishing any thought of separating themselves from their people, they went daily to the national sanctuary as one man; but from the very first they were drawn by special ties to one another, were constantly together, and faithfully attended the common meals, — a custom which rose spontaneously out of their brotherly affection, and in its turn was admirably suited to keep it alive. Then as they ate together, — full of joy to think of the glorious future, but without intemperance or excess, — they commemorated their Master and his parting meal. The praise of God was upon their lips, the favor of all the people was their lot, and their numbers grew from day to day.

But the strongest proof that they were one in heart and soul was the community of goods they established. They had every thing in common, we are told repeatedly, and no one regarded his possessions as his own. They sold their lands and houses to divide the proceeds according to the necessities of each, and consequently none of them was ever in want; for, without the least compulsion, all who possessed any property sold it of their own accord, and gave the whole price to the Apostles for them to divide as they thought fit. Special mention is made in this connection of a certain Joseph, because of the significance his person afterwards acquired. He was a Levite, a native of the island of Cyprus; and his remarkable eloquence gained him the name from the apostles of Barnabas, — that is, “son of exhortation,” or properly “of prophecy.” He sold a piece of land that he possessed, and brought the money to the Twelve for them to dispose of as they would.

In contrast with this noble conduct, we are told of the action of a certain man named Ananias, and his wife Sapphira. They had not wholly forsaken the world, but neither did they wish to seem backward in the eyes of the rest or to lose their future reward.¹ So they sold their land; but Ananias, with the knowledge of his wife, kept back a part of the money and brought the rest to the Apostles pretending it was the whole. Then Peter, instructed by the Holy Spirit and perceiving the attempted fraud, rebuked Ananias for his hypocrisy. He

¹ Compare pp. 168, 345.

might have kept his land. No one compelled him to part with it ; and if he chose to sell it he might have done whatever he liked with the proceeds. But this hypocrisy was from the Evil One ; it was a lie directed not against men, but against the Holy Spirit that dwelt in the community and in the Apostles. Divine retribution was at hand. Hardly had Peter ended when the culprit sank at his feet, a corpse. Some of the younger brethren, most suited by their age for such a service, laid Ananias on a bier, carried him out, and buried him ; for in those days it was not usual to keep a corpse unburied longer than was absolutely necessary. But this scene did not close the appalling drama. About three hours afterward, Sapphira, not knowing what had taken place, came into the assembly of the people. There before Peter lay the sum of money brought by Ananias, still untouched. As Sapphira was looking round for her husband, Peter, pointing with his finger to the coin, demanded sternly : “ Is that the price for which you sold your land ? ” “ It is,” she answered unabashed. Then the sombre words of doom passed Peter’s lips : “ Why have you conspired together to test the power of the Holy Spirit to detect your fraud ? I hear the returning steps of those who have buried your husband, and now the same men shall carry you out also.” At that word, she dropped to the ground and was no more ; while the young men who had returned from the burial place, which was outside the city, entered at the very moment and found the same task awaiting them once more. The guilty pair were laid in the same tomb. How could such a signal judgment fail to make the profoundest impression upon the community and upon all the Jews that heard of it !

This legend is told to the glory of the youthful community whose wrongs were so terribly avenged, and still more to the honor of its leader, the Apostle, who was endowed with such dread powers from on high. But the fact is that, to say nothing of its impossibility, it ascribes distinctly immoral conduct to Peter, both in making him tempt Sapphira to the lie instead of preventing her from telling it, and in making him twice exhibit a spirit of dire vengeance. Even the previous sketch of the life of the community, though not an invention, by no means deserves our implicit confidence. In the first place, the author, or the tradition he recorded, evidently gives us an ideal sketch ; and in itself this is no more than natural,—for Christianity, soon torn by quarrels and dissensions, and stained by worldliness and self-seeking,

fell under a delusion common alike to individuals and societies,¹ in looking back with yearning to the infancy of the faith as a time of innocence and of unqualified purity and love. But the exaggeration of this sketch is more than involuntary. It is deliberate. The very form in which it is given bears the marks of conscious art; for the life of the community is sketched twice in succession, in similar style, but with heightened colors on the second occasion, and each account is followed by a miracle, a persecution, and a triumph won by the Apostles.² Nor does the writer once trouble himself as to how it was possible for more than three thousand souls to assemble and take their meals together; and before long he is himself compelled to mention dissensions which sprang from differences of birth³ or faith.⁴ So, too, in spite of his own assertion, that there was absolute community of goods among the believers, and that in consequence none of them were in need, we presently find him mentioning exceptions to the rule; not only in Ananias and Sapphira, but in a certain Mary who had a house of her own, which she had not sold,⁵ to say nothing of certain "poor" widows to whom a daily allowance was made,—not without some partiality.⁶

But in spite of all this, if we substitute a liberal munificence for community of goods, we need not hesitate to accept the main features of the picture as true, and to indorse the testimony subsequently borne to the Christians by their enemies in a time of great persecutions: "See how they love one another!" How could it be otherwise with the first community of Jesus? Would not older and more recent disciples alike be drawn toward one another and above all toward the Apostles? Would not the feeling that they shared a common life, a common hope, and a common danger urge them cheerfully and liberally to perform the duties of brotherly affection? Would not many of them even sell some piece of property to enable them to supply the wants of needy brethren? Moreover such acts were fostered by the expectation that the world was soon coming to an end. Then no one would enjoy his earthly possessions more, but all these sacrifices would be rewarded at the Messianic judgment. We may be sure, however, that not many rich or distinguished men belonged to the community; and the fact that a few years afterwards we find many poor among the

¹ See vol. i. p. 52.

⁴ Acts xi. 2.

² Acts ii. 42 ff., iv. 32 ff.

⁵ Acts xii. 12.

³ Acts vi. 1.

⁶ Acts vi. 1.

believers at Jerusalem need not in any way drive us to the supposition that an attempt had really been made to establish an impossible community of goods.

There is no room to doubt that the belief in the return of Jesus to establish the kingdom of God was the main characteristic of the community at Jerusalem, and in the eyes of the outside public it constituted its only reason for existence or principle of cohesion. We are also safe in asserting that the believers regularly observed their religious duties as Jews, frequently trod the courts of the temple, and in general fulfilled the precepts of the Law and tradition. How could they do otherwise in such an orthodox atmosphere? Apart from that new life of love, with which the spirit of Jesus inspired them, there was nothing to distinguish them from their fellow-countrymen and believers, except that while many looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, they alone held that that Messiah would be Jesus of Nazareth. In all other respects they were Jews, both in the outer forms of religion and in their ideas and convictions. If we are justified in regarding them as a separate sect at all, then they were certainly a sect of Jews.

But this one point of faith that distinguished them from others involved a principle the consequences and bearings of which they did not yet in the least degree realize. A crucified Messiah was a conception so directly contradictory of all religious prejudices that it must in time annihilate them. Jesus, though executed upon Golgotha, was yet the Messiah. In virtue of his resurrection? So it was said. But as a matter of fact it was in virtue of his moral and religious greatness, in virtue of the might of his spirit, in virtue of the truth he had revealed and the love he had displayed. The true grounds of his Messiahship must have been more and more clearly felt by many of his disciples; and when felt they could not fail to transform or annul the whole Jewish scheme of life and of the world. At the very least, this belief in Jesus secured the preservation of his image with all its beautiful and sacred reminiscences, and of the words which interpreted his principles,—those mighty, life-giving, and renovating principles so little understood as yet. And when thus preserved and honored, his image and his words must force themselves at last into fullest recognition.

From the very day of its institution at Pentecost, we are told, the community, and especially its leaders, enjoyed uni-

versal respect. And well they might; for the Apostles performed a profusion of signs and wonders. The following story serves as an illustration, and further records the first collision with the priestly authorities: —

On a certain day Peter and John were going to the temple at about three o'clock in the afternoon, — the hour of evening prayer and sacrifice;¹ and at the same time there was a man of about middle life carried to the same place. He had been a cripple from his birth, and was set down every day close by one of the entrances to the sanctuary known as the Beautiful Gate, to beg alms of those who came to the temple. As the two Apostles passed him he asked an alms. They turned their earnest gaze upon him, and Peter said, “Look at us!” He looked fixedly, expecting them to give him something, and Peter continued, “Silver and gold I have not, but what I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene [that is to say, by virtue of my faith in him], stand up and walk!” On this he took him by the hand and raised him up, while at the same moment his feet and ankles received their strength. He stood and walked like other men, and went into the temple with his benefactors, leaping for joy and praising God! Now when the people, who recognized him as the beggar of the Beautiful Gate, saw him walking about, they were lost in amazement; and since he still clung to the Apostles a great crowd gathered round them in the southern colonnade, known as Solomon's. Peter seized the opportunity of addressing the crowd.

It was not by their own power or goodness, he said, that they had done this wonder. It was the God of the fathers who had wrought it to the glory of his servant Jesus, the Holy and Just One, who had been delivered by this same multitude to the Roman governor, and when he had determined to set him free had been denied and rejected, while a murderer had been preferred to him. But if *they* had slain the Prince of life, *God* had raised him up from the land of shades. It was to this that the Apostles bore witness; and it was the power of this faith in his Messiahship which Jesus had given them that had completely restored the cripple before all their eyes. And now, since the people and their leaders had alike rejected Jesus because they did not know that he was the Messiah, and since God had thus fulfilled the predictions of all the prophets that his Anointed One must suffer, it remained for them to repent and be converted, that their sins might be

¹ Compare pp. 140, 250.

blotted out. Then should come, after a time of woe and terror, the season of refreshment, — the dawn of the Golden Age, — when Jesus should return from heaven. Thither he had been received for a time till God should send him as the Messiah, at the restoration of all things,¹ as foretold by Moses² and Samuel, and all their successors. And to them in particular, since they might claim the prophets and God's covenant with Abraham³ as their own, He had sent his servant first, with all the blessings that would follow on repentance.

So spoke the two Apostles to the people; but when the priests, the ruler of the temple-guard, and the Sadducees approached, they were much disturbed by their preaching, especially of the resurrection; and accordingly they seized them, and threw them into prison, since it was now too late in the day to allow of the instantaneous trial prescribed by custom. Meanwhile, however, many of the hearers were already converted, and the community henceforth numbered about five thousand. The next day the Sanhedrim assembled, with Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests;⁴ and Peter and John, together with the former cripple, were brought before them. They were required to declare by what power or name (by the Evil One or by God) they had performed this cure. Then Peter, seized by the Holy Spirit, cried out in stirring words that if they were on their trial for the blessing they had conferred upon the unfortunate cripple, then all the councillors and all Israel with them must know that the wonder had been worked by the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised again. He was the stone rejected by the builders, but made the corner-stone by God.⁵ The promised blessings were to be looked for from him alone. There was no salvation except by faith in him!

The Sanhedrim was completely at a loss. What was the meaning of such confidence on the part of these unlettered laymen whom they now recognized as the companions of Jesus? And there stood the cripple beside them, whose restoration could not be got rid of! They sent the prisoners out while they consulted together. The miracle was already the wonder of all the city, and could not possibly be denied. All they could do was to try to stop the matter going any further by forbidding their prisoners, under the sternest threats, to utter another word to any one about Jesus as the

¹ See p. 225.

² Genesis xxii. 18.

² Deuteronomy xviii. 15 ff.

⁴ See p. 96.

⁵ See p. 390.

Messiah. In vain! Peter and John demanded whether it was right in the sight of God to obey them rather than Him, for it was a moral impossibility for them to keep silence. This provoked more violent threats than ever; but the end of it was that they could find no excuse for punishing them, and had to release them for fear of the people, who glorified God with one voice for this great miracle.

As soon as the Apostles were at liberty, they went to their friends and told them all that had taken place. Then they offered a fervent and united prayer to the Creator of all things. Now that the prophecy of David, concerning opposition and enmity to the Lord's anointed,¹ had been fulfilled at Jerusalem; now that tetrarch and procurator, heathen and Jew, had conspired against Jesus,—they prayed that God might give them courage to preach in spite of all these threats, with power to work miracles in the name of Jesus. And in token that the prayer was heard, the whole place of assembly shook, the Holy Spirit seized them all again; they came forward undismayed, and continued to bear mighty witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

A second persecution ran a similar course. After the divine judgment had fallen upon Ananias and Sapphira, the community was constantly augmented by whole troops of men and women, and the Apostles displayed miraculous powers without parallel. Here is a specimen of their mighty deeds. In Solomon's colonnade the believers assembled, one in heart with the Apostles; all who had not joined the community stood respectfully aside, and the masses were evidently impressed with deepest awe. As the Apostles advanced to the colonnade, one might see sick people carried out along the way and laid on beds or mattresses by the side of the street, in the hope that Peter's shadow at least might fall upon them, for even that sufficed to heal them. And from the neighbouring places, too, they came with the sick and the possessed, and not one of them returned uncomforted. But the high priest and the other Sadducees could no longer endure to look on passively while the Apostles made such mighty progress, and accordingly they threw them into the city gaol. It was but labor lost! In the night the angel of the Lord unbolted the prison doors and led them out, commanding them to resume the preaching of salvation to the people in the temple; and this they did in the early hours of the morning. Meanwhile the high priest and the others had summoned the whole San-

¹ Psalm ii. 1, 2.

hedrim and sent to the prison for the Apostles ; but the messenger returned alone and said : “The doors were firmly barred and bolted, and the sentries at their posts, but the prisoners were gone.” We may well believe that the president, the captain of the temple-guard, and the high priests were at their wits’ end now. At that very moment some one rushed in with the news that the very men whom they had thrown into prison were standing up and teaching in the temple ! The captain and his men hastened to secure them and bring them before the Council ; but they used no violence, for fear they should be stoned by the people. There stood the Twelve before the Sanhedrim, while the high priest sternly cried : “We forbade you expressly to speak about your faith, and yet you have made it echo through Jerusalem, and are trying to throw the responsibility of that man’s execution upon us.” Then Peter, in the name of all the rest, answered with undaunted firmness that they ought to obey God rather than men ; and it was God who had raised up Jesus, whom they had slain on the cross ; it was God who had exalted him as Prince and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness to Israel. “And we are his witnesses of these things,” he concluded ; “and, moreover, the Holy Spirit, which God gives to all who obey Him, shows that they are true.”

The members of the Sanhedrim waxed furious and were almost sentencing the Apostles to death, when one of them, a Pharisee of the name of Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, held in high honor by all the people, stood up, ordered the accused to be removed, and then delivered his opinion, supported by historical analogies. He advised his colleagues to pause before proceeding to violence ; for a bad cause was sure to collapse of itself. Thus a certain Theudas had arisen a short time back, with great pretensions, and had collected about four hundred followers. But he was killed, his followers were scattered, and his pretensions came to nothing. Afterwards Judas, the Galilæan, had headed a revolt on occasion of the census ;¹ but he too was destroyed, and his followers dispersed. In the same way, if this preaching was false doctrine, a mere human invention, it would fall to pieces of itself without the interference of the Sanhedrim. Violence was at best superfluous, and if by chance it should be a truth from God with which they had to do, then surely they must avoid all violent resistance, not only as vain presumption but as sinful fighting against God.

¹ See pp. 4, 5, 6, 56, 89.

The Sanhedrim listened to reason. The Apostles were called in, condemned to be scourged, once more forbidden to speak of the Nazarene, and then dismissed. Filled with joy at having been counted worthy to suffer ignominy for their Master's title, they left the judgment hall and ceased not, day by day, in the temple and at home, to preach Jesus as the Messiah.

In these two stories we can find little else than half intentional and half unconscious fiction. The miracles, which are so recklessly multiplied, are some of them superfluous,—such as the liberation of the Apostles by night, followed at once by their recapture; and others, such as the cures effected by Peter's shadow, of the nature of magic. The helpless clumsiness of the Jewish authorities, so sharply contrasting with the intrepid decision of the Apostles, sounds equally unhistorical, and we cannot help exclaiming, "Why did not they believe, like the rest?" Indeed, at this rate Jerusalem with all its neighborhood would very soon have been cleared of sick people and of unbelievers alike! All that we are at liberty to accept as historical is that a collision with the authorities probably took place, though the whole drift of the stories that record it, together with all the details, appears incredible. The writer's intention is clearly to glorify the community at Jerusalem, especially the Apostles, and most of all Peter. This is why he makes the miracles take place as publicly as possible, and instantly acquire the utmost fame. A second object of the writer, or his authority, is to represent the Jewish people, especially the national or religious party, as at first distinctly favorable to the cause of Jesus. This is why we are so constantly, conspicuously, and emphatically assured that the masses revered, honored, and protected the believers and their chiefs, while none but the Sadducees persecuted them, and the Twelve found an advocate, not to say a deliverer, in the Pharisee Gamaliel.

This Rabban Gamaliel I., the grandson of Hillel, and the renowned leader of the school of Jerusalem, who died in 58 A.D., is known to us from other sources; but he certainly never uttered this discourse, for it betrays a strong suspicion, to say the least of it, that this preaching of the Christ was really of divine origin, and moreover it is a tissue of contradictions. Theudas and Judas were not put down without violence, so that their fate could not furnish an argument against interfering with the Apostles. The principle, "Let error work its way unchecked, and it will ruin itself," is one

which cannot possibly be carried out ; and we shall soon see Paul, who is introduced to us as a disciple of Gamaliel, act in directest contradiction to his master's supposed advice. But the most conclusive fact of all is that this Theudas, of whom Gamaliel is made to speak, was a prophet, or popular leader, who did not appear till more than ten years after the time we are now speaking of, and a good thirty years *after* Judas of Galilee, so that our writer has committed a twofold sin against chronology.¹

A few more miracles ascribed to Peter will be spoken of elsewhere,² since the scene is laid away from Jerusalem, and they occur in a different connection. Presently, when Paul appears in the Acts as a worker of miracles, we shall gain fresh light as to the origin of all these stories. At present, therefore, we need say no more. But hereafter, whenever we find ourselves in contact with the primitive community of Jerusalem, or transported into its midst, we shall have to consider it with especial reference to the dissensions of the apostolic age ; and we will therefore seize this opportunity, passing over eight or nine eventful years, of giving the only remaining narrative about the community of Jerusalem, which stands in no connection with these apostolic dissensions. It simply dwells upon the relations of the believers to the Jewish government and people now hostile and persecuting, instead of favorable as at first ; and, though embellished by tradition, it records an event which may well be accepted in the main as historical.

It was the last year of the reign of Herod Agrippa I. In his zeal for the Jewish religion, but on what special occasion we cannot say, this friend of the Pharisees laid violent hands upon some of the believers in Jerusalem. Nay, one of the Twelve, James the son of Zebedee, fell a victim to the sword, and ere long the community was threatened with a still heavier blow. For the king observed that the Jews were pleased by what he had done ; so he seized on Peter also, just before the Passover, and put him under careful guard, intending to pass public sentence of death upon him as soon as the feast was over.

The last night had set in. The Apostle slept peacefully in his prison, while the congregation watched in fervent prayer to God to rescue this precious life. Alas ! there was little hope of his escape, for heavy bolts and bars held him relent-

¹ Compare pp. 56, 96.

² See chap. vi. p. 544.

lessly in his captivity, and he was guarded by four soldiers, relieved every three hours, who must answer with their lives for his safe custody. At this very moment he lay between two of the soldiers, with one of his arms fettered to each of them, while the two others kept strict watch at the gate, a little way apart from one another. But lo! when all was quiet, when no one suspected any thing, a glow of heavenly light shone of a sudden through the darkness of the prison, and an angel of the Lord stood by the wretched bed. He pushed Peter's side and woke him, with the words : "Rise up quickly!" Then the fetters dropped from his hands and he rose mechanically. "Gird up your garments and bind your sandals to your feet," continued the angel; and when the Apostle had obeyed, he added : "Throw on your mantle and follow me!" Peter did so, thinking all the while that it was a vision, and that he should soon find himself upon his bed and in his fetters again. They passed unobserved by the first and second watch, and reached the iron gate that opened into the street, unchallenged. The gate opened of itself; they went out, turned round the corner, walked along one street together, and all at once the angel was gone! It was only now that Peter returned to full consciousness, and said : "Now I know for certain that the Lord hath sent his angel to rescue me from the violence of Herod and the people's thirst for blood." So he hastened along the way that led to the house of Mary the mother of John, surnamed Mark, where a number of the faithful were assembled in prayer. He knocked at the door, and the maid Rhoda came at the summons; but before she opened she asked who it was that came at such an untimely hour. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so delighted that she forgot to open the door for him, and ran in and told them all that Peter was standing outside. They said she was raving, but she persisted in saying : "Indeed, indeed, he is there!" "Then it must be his guardian angel," they said ; "it can surely bode no good!" Meanwhile Peter knocked again and yet again; and when at last they opened the door, there to the amazement of them all stood Peter himself. He motioned them with his hand to keep silence, and told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. Then he told them to inform James and all the brethren who were not present of what had taken place, and departed himself elsewhere.

Picture the deadly terror of the soldiers when the morning broke and they found the prisoner had vanished without a

trace! When the king sent for Peter and heard that he was gone, he had the sentinels thrown into chains, tried, and executed. Little did he think that the avenging hand of God was already stretched over his own head! It was but a few weeks afterwards, when he had left Jerusalem for his magnificent residential city of Cæsarea-Palestina, that he received a Phœnician embassy there. He had been violently incensed against Tyre and Sidon, and had forbidden the export of corn and other necessities of life from his kingdom to these cities. The Phœnicians, who were reduced to great perplexities by this measure, found means of bribing Blastus, the king's first chamberlain and favorite, to espouse their cause, and then had begged for peace. On a certain day, therefore, Herod granted their embassy a solemn public audience, and announced his resolution. Seated on his throne and clad in his robes of state, he delivered an address to them in the presence of the people, and laid down the conditions of peace. The splendor of his appearance impressed all present with a sense of his incomparable majesty, and the substance of what he said so delighted them that he had no sooner finished than they burst into rapturous applause, and the blasphemous cry echoed from end to end of the quadrangle, "It is a god that speaks, and not a man!" Herod did not reject this sacrilegious flattery. So the angel of the Lord smote him, and a few days afterwards he sank under an equally loathsome and painful disease of the bowels.

This angel is already known to us from the narratives of the Old Testament, where he appears as an explanation, or rather a description, of sudden sickness and death.¹ For the rest we find the occasion and manner of Herod's death described almost identically in Josephus. This historian however knows nothing of an embassy from the Phœnicians and a public audience granted them; but speaks of games in honor of the emperor Claudius, at which the king, when the first rays of the sun shone upon his silvered robe, was greeted by his sycophants as a god. Five days afterwards he was a corpse, having suffered ever-increasing agonies meanwhile. This confirmation gives a certain guarantee for the truth of the story we are considering, which stands alone in the book of Acts. The account of Peter's rescue is of course fabulous, nor does it seem to have occurred to the writer how unworthy of God it would be to make victims of the unoffending sentinels. But that James was slain and Peter imprisoned

¹ See vol. ii. pp. 29, 291.

may be accepted as fact; and, instead of the messenger from heaven who gives the latter his liberty, we may suppose that the death of the persecutor, which so often opened prison doors, or the intercession of some friend, or any other of the hundred chances that might give a favorable turn to things, resulted in Peter's regaining his freedom.

We may remark in passing that Peter's message to the absent brethren contains the first mention of James the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus, as a distinguished member of the community at Jerusalem. We shall presently meet him again in this capacity, together with Peter.

But then a great development will already have taken place, of which at present the primitive community had not even a presentiment, against which it ranged itself in vain, by which the cause of Jesus was shaken free from the ceremonial restraints of the Mosaic law and the national exclusiveness of the Israelitish prophets.

Upon this important subject we will now fix our attention.



CHAPTER III.

STEPHEN AND PHILIP.

MATTHEW XVII. 1-9; ACTS VI.-VIII. 8, 26-40, XI. 19-21; MATTHEW XV. 21-28.¹

ON a certain day, says a celebrated legend that rose towards the close of the apostolic age, Jesus took his three chosen friends, Peter, James, and John, and went up a lofty mountain to be alone with them. Here in the sight of the three his form was transfigured, his countenance shone like the sun, and his garments glittered like the light. At the same moment they saw two figures at his side in the like heavenly glory, and recognized them at once as Moses and Elijah, who were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter spoke, and said to Jesus: "Lord! it is well for us to be here. If it please thee I will make three booths: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But before he had finished speaking the shining cloud that girds the Deity had descended upon the mountain-top and streamed over the three figures

¹ Luke ix. 28-36; Mark ix. 2-10, vii. 24-30.

till they seemed to melt into the glow and were lost to sight, while the voice of God sounded from the cloud to Peter and the others : “ This is my beloved Son ; hear him ! ” Then in a moment all was gone ; but there was no doubt of whom the voice had spoken, for when the disciples looked round they could see none but Jesus.

Even without the additional light which the comparison with an Old Testament precedent¹ throws upon the details of this picture, its general purport can hardly be mistaken ; while the importance attached to it may be gathered from a distinct reference being made to it in the latest book of the Bible, the second Epistle of Peter.² In the presence of his friends and disciples Jesus is transfigured, — that is to say, he is recognized by them as the Messiah ; but the lawgiver and the representative prophet³ still stand in undiminished glory at his side. And Peter, together with James and John, wishes to preserve all these three forces, — the Jewish law and national expectation no less than the Gospel, — and to build tents for them all. Vain is the wish, and vain the project ! The divine will makes itself known, and Moses and Elijah disappear, leaving Jesus alone singled out as the son of God’s good pleasure.⁴ There should not and could not be any permanent alliance between the new religious truth and the ancient practices of external piety prescribed by the Law, or the ancient conceptions of a proud, unloving nationality.⁵

But the Apostles had not yet perceived this incompatibility.⁶ It was outside their circle and without their help that this great step was made, as we shall see in this and the following chapters. It is not without reason that Peter, James, and John, whom the evangelical tradition represents as the chosen friends of Jesus, and who were held in the highest estimation at Jerusalem and elsewhere as the pillars of the community, — it is not without reason that these three men are specially indicated as wishing to retain both Moses and Elijah, while Peter, pre-eminently the Apostle of the Jews, is made their spokesman.⁷ James the son of Joseph we must probably regard as virtually taking the place of James the son of Zebedee, who was cut off early. Nor must we overlook the statement made by all the three Evangelists —

¹ Exodus xxiv. 15, 16, 18.

² 2 Peter i. 16b.-18.

³ See pp. 49, 50.

⁴ Psalm ii. 7 ; Isaiah xlvi. 1 ; and Deuteronomy xviii. 15 ; compare p. 119.

⁵ See p. 213.

⁶ See pp. 211, 232, 292 ff.

⁷ Galatians ii. 7, 9, 12 ; 1 Corinthians i. 12.

though Mark has it in the wrong place — that the disciples were very much alarmed by what took place. Luke says that terror came upon them when Moses and Elijah went into the cloud and disappeared ; while according to Matthew, when the voice from heaven had corrected their first intention, they fell down to the ground in fear, but were touched, raised up, and encouraged by Jesus.

We may mention, incidentally, that here again¹ Luke represents the vision as a more palpable fact than the others make it, though even Mark speaks of the whiteness of the garments of Jesus, which shone as no bleacher upon earth could make them. The third Gospel further speaks of *the mountain*, as if a real and well-known mountain were intended ; and in the same spirit the later tradition, overlooking the emblematic character of the story, pointed out Tabor as the mount of the Transfiguration. Luke also tells us that Jesus went up to pray,² and adds the not very appropriate comments that the disciples were drowsy, though they kept themselves awake ; that Peter did not know what he was saying, — an unlucky touch which reappears in Mark, — and that the Apostle did not speak until the representatives of the old dispensation were on the point of departing. Finally, Luke stands alone in saying that when Moses and Elijah appeared in glory they discoursed of the death upon the cross which Jesus must endure at Jerusalem ; and though this trait does not at all astonish us, especially in Luke,³ it is quite foreign to the main conception of the scene.

This conception is that the authority of the Law and the prophets must be annulled. But of course this could not be done suddenly, nor without a conflict. It was a question which only came forward gradually, and could not be settled without many a strain in the bosom of the community.

Let us listen to what is told us of the origin of the first of these collisions between the old and the new spirit !

So far from being appalled or discouraged by the mortal peril that threatened them and the maltreatment they had experienced, the Apostles were but stimulated to continue their preaching of Jesus as the Messiah both in the temple and at home ;⁴ and consequently the numbers of the faithful still increased. If only this outward success had been accompanied by undiminished brotherly affection and unbroken harmony ! But alas ! the season of first love had all too

¹ See p. 120.

² See pp. 465, 475, 494, 495.

² See p. 261.

⁴ See p. 498.

soon passed by. Differences of language and of country asserted themselves, and peace had fled.

For though most of the members of the community had been born and bred on Jewish soil, and were so-called Hebrews, yet there was also a large number of Grecians among them,—that is to say, foreign Jews, who had settled in Jerusalem or the neighborhood,¹ but continued for the most part to speak their native Greek, which was then the language of the world. Among them there were even certain proselytes, or men of heathen birth, who had undergone circumcision, accepted the whole Mosaic law, and been incorporated as members of the Jewish people. Now these two elements, the Hebrew and the Grecian, had never completely amalgamated; and, as the community increased, it fell more and more completely into two separate groups. The cause of this may be found partly in the natural tendency to associate with one's fellow-townspeople and fellow-countrymen; but partly, perhaps, in a certain tone of superiority assumed by the natives of Palestine toward the Jews from heathen lands; and yet more in greater or less diversities of feeling and opinion which could not always be kept back. For the Grecians, who had grown up and possibly lived for many years in a heathen atmosphere, were for the most part less intolerant and bitter than the others, while their frequent contact with the Grecian civilization had in many cases opened their minds and expanded their horizon; and, finally, they knew by experience that even at a distance from the temple and its dazzling ceremonial an earnest piety was possible.

The occasion, however, that revealed the elements of dissension is said to have been of a purely material nature. The Grecians complained of the Hebrews, apparently with justice, on the ground that in the daily distribution of money or food to the needy members of the community their widows had to give way to the others, and always came off worst. This could not possibly be an accident; but the charge of partiality was not pressed against the Apostles personally, or at any rate not against them alone, but against those who surrounded them, and in general the whole Hebrew-speaking, or rather Aramaic-speaking, portion of the community. An end must certainly be put to these complaints, and at the same time to the strained and uneasy relations which they indicated. So the Twelve summoned a meeting of all the believers, and laid the whole question before them, with the

¹ See p. 485.

words, “ We should have to sacrifice the work of preaching if we gave the sustenance of the poor the attention it requires ; so do you, brethren, look round for some of your number who are favorably known to all of you, and select seven of them amply endowed with the gifts of the Spirit and of wisdom needful for this delicate and laborious work of love ; and we will then commit this service to them, and devote the whole of our own time and strength to prayer in our assemblies and to the preaching of the Lord.”

The proposal was received with unmixed approval, and the brethren selected Stephen, a man conspicuous for his mighty faith and glowing enthusiasm, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and finally a certain proselyte, Nicolas of Antioch. These men were then presented to the Apostles, who consecrated them to the service by prayer, and by laying their hands upon them.

Meanwhile, the community at Jerusalem was constantly increasing ; even the priests, in many cases, forgot their enmity and became believers. But before long a fearful storm was to break.

Among the Seven, Stephen distinguished himself from the first by the wealth of his divine gifts and powers, which enabled him to do great signs and wonders among the Jews. He directed his preaching especially to foreigners, whom he found in their several synagogues ; for we must know that the Holy City was full of houses of prayer. According to the Talmud there were no fewer than four hundred and eighty ; but, of course, the greater number of them would be small and insignificant. It appears that almost every district or great city, in which there were many Jews, had one of these synagogues in Jerusalem, which served for the use of any of its citizens who might permanently settle in Jerusalem, and also for those who went up to celebrate a feast. It was a kind of general rendezvous. Thus, in connection with Stephen’s work, we are told of synagogues of the Asians, or natives of the coast of Asia Minor ; of the Cilicians, in whose capital (Tarsus) many Jews were settled ; of the Alexandrians, for two of the five quarters of the magnificent capital of Egypt were entirely Jewish ; of the Cyrenaens, for one-fourth of the population of Cyrene was Jewish ;¹ and, lastly, of the Libertini, or Roman “ freedmen,” — that is to say, Jews who had been captured in war, and carried to Rome as slaves, or had been born in slavery there, but who had subsequently

¹ See p. 448.

been set free by their masters. Now in these synagogues Stephen encountered the most violent opposition, both because of his great success and because of the special views which he enunciated. In his mouth the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah appeared to threaten religion with insult and danger. So some of the worshippers attempted to refute him, and argued with him as to the abiding authority of the Law and the eternal significance of the temple and its service. It was all in vain ! These controversies, as is often the case, instead of making Stephen withdraw the assertions to which so much exception was taken, only drove him to more uncompromising utterances than ever ; and yet his opponents could never hold their own against his penetration and skill, and above all against his enthusiasm. So they incited certain fanatics to accuse Stephen publicly of blasphemous (heretical) language against the Law of Moses and the whole Jewish religion.¹ This made a great commotion, both among the populace and the members of the Sanhedrim ; and as Stephen, who went his way undaunted, was again discoursing in a synagogue, he found himself suddenly surrounded by his enemies, seized, and dragged before the Council.

The trial began at once. False witnesses² had been secured, and gave their testimony : "This man preaches day by day against the temple and the Law. For we have heard him say that ere long this Jesus of Nazareth will devastate the temple and abolish the institutions given us by Moses." In burning indignation all the senators fixed their eyes upon the prisoner, and behold ! his face was flooded with a heavenly glory. But the president asked sternly, "Is it true what they have said ?" and Stephen instantly replied in a long discourse, in which he ran through the whole history of Israel from Abraham's call to the building of Solomon's temple, in a vein which strongly reminds us of Ezra's confession on occasion of the introduction of the Mosaic law.³

Stephen traced in detail the fulfilment of God's prediction to the patriarch that his posterity should sojourn in a strange land ; should long be oppressed there ; should be avenged and brought out by God ; should then be blessed with the revelation of the true religion, and should be brought into the land of promise, where they must worship Him. It was only indirectly and incidentally that he refuted the accusation brought against him by speaking of God's election, guidance,

¹ Compare pp. 434, 435.

² See vol. ii. p. 500.

³ Compare p. 429.

and protection of Israel ; by describing Moses as the great man of God to whom the angel of the Lord on Sinai revealed the commandments, the observance of which gives life, and by appealing to the prophets¹ in support of his ideas about the temple. The real conception and drift of the discourse was to hurl back the charge of impiety with redoubled force upon the people, and to explain by historical analogy the cause of the unfavorable reception which his preaching of the Messiah had met from Israel. For the greater and more numerous God's blessings had been, the more corrupt and wicked had Israel always shown itself. Moses had felt it more than any one,—Moses, who foretold the coming of a prophet, like himself; namely, the Messiah : Moses, who was himself a type of that Messiah in his person and his lot, especially in the treatment he experienced at the hands of his people. For when he tried to rescue his brothers they renounced him ; and afterwards, in spite of all that God had done for them and given them through him, they disobeyed and deserted him, and made themselves a golden calf, whereupon God gave them over to idolatry. And in the same way their age-old superstition, that the Most High actually dwelt in the temple, was a proof of their narrowness and want of spirituality. As Stephen thus set forth the rebellious spirit of Israel, his words grew hotter every moment ; and though he had begun very courteously, addressing the senators as “fathers” and the rest as “brethren,” and begging their attention, he ended by bursting into a violent denunciation, in which he chastised them as a stiff-necked people, externally pious, but inwardly estranged from God, deaf to His voice, and no better than so many heathen. “ You never fail,” he cried, “ to resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did before you ! Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute ? It was they who slew all who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and it is you who have now betrayed and murdered the Righteous One himself ; it is you who have accepted the Law ordained by angels, but have not observed it ! ”

The hearers were seized with ungovernable rage, and gnashed their teeth against him ; but he did not so much as see them, for he was gazing in a transport into heaven, where he saw the Divine Glory and saw Jesus standing at God's right hand, as though he had risen to receive him. “ See there ! ” he cried ; “ I can see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on God's right hand.” Then the sena-

¹ See vol. ii., pp. 527, 528.

tors shrieked with rage and horror ; and, putting their fingers into their ears, they rushed upon Stephen as a single man, drove him out of the city, and stoned him on the very spot. Not a shade of fear or vindictiveness passed over the martyr's soul. As the stones came crashing upon him, he raised his hands on high, and said : " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ! " Then he fell upon his knees and uttered one last cry. It was a prayer for his murderers, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ! " and he breathed his last, crushed among the stones.

At the fall of night certain pious men came to the deserted place of punishment, drew out the mangled corpse from beneath the stones, gave it decent burial, and made great mourning for the dead, with funeral music and fasting.

But only very few were bold and generous enough to think and act in this way, for the madness of fanaticism was now aroused. The death of Stephen was the signal for a furious persecution, which scattered all the brethren through every district of Judæa and Samaria, except the Apostles only, who remained at Jerusalem.

Among the persecutors a certain man in the early prime of life, named Saul, particularly distinguished himself. He was present at the death of Stephen ; and when the two witnesses whose duty it was to throw the first stones laid aside their mantles, he took charge of them. It rejoiced his heart to see the blasphemer rooted out from the people of the Lord. And yet ! —

This is a most remarkable narrative, and is doubly interesting because the first martyr appears in it as the herald of the independent development of the Christian community. We must not leave it therefore till we have submitted it to a careful examination.

In the main we may regard it as historical, though of course we cannot believe in the assembly of all these thousands of disciples, in the conversion of a whole host of priests, in the mighty miracles of Stephen, in the transfiguration of his countenance till it became like an angel's, or even in the genuineness of his discourse, — which contains several small inaccuracies that we have not stayed to point out.¹ All this, and more of the like nature, we pass over ; nor will we venture to decide whether Stephen's prayer to be received for a time into heaven, together with his glorified Lord, was really

¹ Acts vii. 2, 6, 16, 29, *et seq.*

uttered by him in sacred transport at the moment of his martyrdom, or was put into his mouth in after times, when the Christians believed that all the martyrs would be exempt from the necessity of descending to the land of shades.¹ Again, though the writer represents the Sanhedrim as behaving like a band of savage robbers, and Stephen as the victim of a tumult, he puts us in the way of correcting his own account, and lets us see that the trial and the defence took the regular course by speaking of the two witnesses who laid aside their outer garments and began the execution as required by law and order. Perhaps it is also due to this inaccuracy of description that we are no longer able to discover whether the Sanhedrim demanded and obtained permission to carry out the sentence, or whether they exceeded their powers by dispensing with it.² It has been conjectured that just at this time there was not a procurator in office at all, — the old one having been deposed and the new one not yet having arrived, — and that the Sanhedrim in consequence may have taken more upon themselves than they would otherwise have ventured to do. The striking similarity between the way in which Stephen meets his fate and the account in the third Gospel of the last hours of Jesus may rouse a certain amount of suspicion, but this suspicion must fall less upon the narrative we are now considering than upon the other.³ On the other hand, the partial coincidence between the charge brought against Stephen and that which the first two Gospels represent as preferred against Jesus seems to plead for the accuracy of both accounts. And here too the “falseness” of the evidence does not consist in its being an invention, but in the turn which it gave to Stephen’s words. He certainly never intended to say that when Jesus returned he would violently destroy the temple and abolish the whole Law, but simply that in the kingdom of God the service of the temple would give way to a purer form of worship, and the idolatry of forms and ceremonies to a life in the true spirit of the Law. Finally, the writer once more corrects himself by letting us know⁴ that not all the believers, but only the Grecians who sympathized with Stephen, were persecuted and expelled from Jerusalem. Not only the Apostles, therefore, remained

¹ Revelation vi. 9, 11, xx. 4; compare Philippians i. 23.

² See pp. 437, 438.

³ Compare Acts vii. 56, 59, 60 with Luke xxii. 69, xxiii. 46, 34; and see pp. 432 ff., 451 ff.

⁴ Acts ix. 26 ff., and xi. 19 ff., in contrast with viii. 1.

in Jerusalem, but all those who had been on their side ; for they had not exposed themselves to any danger, and had not roused the spirit of fanaticism. The persecution was violent,¹ but limited ; though the account in Acts may be true to this extent, that the community in general suffered in its reputation among the rigid Jews, when the attitude assumed by the more free-thinking members brought suspicion upon the whole.

Now the evidence it supplies of these internal divisions is just what makes the story, on the whole, deserve our confidence. Stephen is evidently our author's hero.² He wishes to secure him full recognition, and consequently makes the light fall full upon him while the Apostles sink into the background. But when the progress of the narrative necessarily brings out the differences of view that had very early found their way into the community, the author endeavors to conceal or disguise the fact as completely as possible. So he simply dismisses the accusation against Stephen as "false," just as he afterwards does in the case of Paul ;³ he makes the whole community victims of the persecution ; and, above all, he finds the point of difference between the two parties in no religious question at all, but in a simple matter of the distribution of alms ; while he makes the Seven not the representatives of a party within the community, but officers selected by all the faithful together, and consecrated by the Apostles themselves with prayer and the laying on of hands. Now this attempt at concealment is the very best evidence of the fact—which peeps through the narrative in spite of the author—that in the community at Jerusalem, even in the first period of its existence, two divergent tendencies were gradually discernible. In general terms they may be described as that of the Hebrews,—who formed the great majority, recognized the Twelve as their leaders, and in their turn exercised a marked influence upon them,—and that of the Grecians, whose champions or leaders were the Seven.

We are safe in assuming that all the Seven were Grecians. This belief is suggested by their names, which are all Greek ; for though Palestinian Jews had sometimes Greek names, as was the case with the two Apostles Andrew and Philip for instance, yet it cannot be an accident that there is not a single Hebrew name in the seven. Besides, we are expressly told that Nicolas came from Antioch, and was even born a heathen, while Stephen and Philip are pointed out as Greeks

¹ Galatians i. 13.

² Acts vi. 5, 8, 10, 15.

³ Acts xxi. 28, 21.

with almost equal certainty by the circles in which they worked and the whole tone of their teaching. And even in the case of the other four, whose names alone we know, the circumstances of their appointment and the drift of the story which records it require us to suppose a foreign origin. It remains a mystery why Barnabas, himself a Grecian Jew, a generous giver, and a man of liberal views, does not appear among the Seven.

And now the question forces itself upon us whether complaints about the distribution of alms were really the beginning of the whole affair. Many have traced the institution of the order of "deacons" in the appointment of the Seven; but this is out of the question. It would be more to the point to speak of "elders;" for it was to them, according to a later account,¹ that the management and distribution of funds for the poor was entrusted at Jerusalem. But the writer evidently intends to represent the office of the Seven (a sacred number) as purely local and temporary, confined to Jerusalem, and terminated by this persecution. Setting this point aside then, there is no inherent difficulty in believing that the neglect of the Greek widows was the occasion of the independent appearance of the two schools; for how often does it happen that a deep-seated difference is first openly avowed upon some far more trivial occasion than the one we are now considering! But, unfortunately for our belief in this version of the affair, there is a somewhat analogous case of which we still possess the genuine and original account by Paul; and there the author of Acts represents a split which was really caused by a conflict of principle of extreme importance, as though it were occasioned by an insignificant disagreement on another matter.² This naturally makes us suspicious in the case of the Seven also; and when we look a little closer we find that our author yet again corrects himself, for instead of making Stephen busy himself with distributing the gifts of love, he represents him as constantly preaching the word of God. And in the same way he speaks of Philip, not as an almoner but as a preacher, and expressly mentions the name given him, descriptive of his office, in the words, "Philip the Evangelist, one of the Seven."³ That sounds exceedingly like a parallel to "James the Apostle, one of the Twelve;" and perhaps we must look upon all the Seven as preachers. The original occasion, then, upon which they came forward as

¹ Acts xi. 30.

² Acts xv. 37 ff. compared with Galatians ii. 13, 14.

³ Acts xxi. 8.

representatives of the Greek school is certainly lost, and we must regard their appointment as almoners by the community and their consecration by the Apostles as a fiction.

We have frequently spoken of two schools in the community, but we must not suppose that as yet there was any distinctly marked and conscious difference of view between them. What difference there was, was rather felt and to some extent manifested in the mutual bearing of the parties than clearly expressed. The great majority of the followers of Jesus were naturally more strict in the observances of external religion in the rigidly orthodox Jerusalem than his immediate associates had ever been in Galilee.¹ But the minority also clustered round a nucleus of personal disciples of Jesus who had joined him early or late in his ministry, and had perhaps grasped his principles better than the Twelve had done;² or if they had only heard and seen him during his stay in Jerusalem, yet the manner of his first appearance there, his sayings about renewing the temple and about sacrifice, his castigation of the Pharisees, and much more besides, had sufficed to teach them his spirit,³ — and the minority which gathered round them moved with more freedom than the rest. Inclination and capacity, backed by a certain amount of general culture, helped towards this result. If they cherished but a languid interest in the temple service, and insisted exclusively upon conduct in harmony with the (moral) spirit of the Law, they felt that in doing so they were bringing their hearts and lives into sympathy with the prophets, and above all with the Master himself. They expected that when Jesus returned, “the Law and the prophets” would be fulfilled in this moral sense, to the exclusion of all the commandments of men. Though they had not the least idea of detaching themselves from their people, yet we may gather from the discourse of Stephen, from what we are soon to hear of Philip, and from the course of events at Antioch, that they had largely overcome their national exclusiveness and were quite disposed to throw open the approach to the kingdom of God to others than Jews; and this result was due partly to their indifference to Levitical purity, which was the great wall of partition between Israel and the heathen, partly to their strong sense of the stubbornness displayed by Israel against Moses and the prophets, against Jesus and his witnesses. But all this does not imply that there was any sharp division

¹ See pp. 211–215, 232, 276 ff.

² See pp. 365 ff., 373, 431, 383–386, 218.

³ See pp. 184, 198, 352.

or opposition between them and the Hebrew believers. Far from it. But it was they who first preached the exclusive importance of a life in the Master's spirit, and began to work out or apply the great principle involved in the recognition of the Crucified as the Messiah.¹

And now that we understand the significance of this record and of the person of Stephen, and observe that Paul took an active part in his execution and in persecuting his companions, we cannot help thinking of the first martyr's work in connection with that of the Apostle of the gentiles himself. It is true that the charge preferred against Stephen, when interpreted by his own defence, indicates a position far below that to which Paul attained ; for in Stephen and his friends we can see no trace of the great Apostle's doctrine concerning the Law, the crucifixion, and salvation by faith, — of his piercing insight, his undaunted thoroughness, his definite breach with Judaism. Yet certainly Stephen was Paul's precursor, and we have now witnessed the beginning of the new work of the Spirit, the first sign of life of the new community of the Christ, the clear indication of a new period in the history of the Gospel.

The persecution set on foot against a portion of the community had, as usual, exactly the opposite effect to the one intended. When Stephen had been executed and several of the Grecians thrown into prison and dragged before the tribunal, a considerable number of the believers, feeling that they were no longer safe at the seat of orthodoxy, left Jerusalem for other Judæan cities, and in some cases even went to Samaria. And wherever they went or stayed, even if they did not come forward publicly as preachers, they could not help taking such opportunities as occurred of speaking on the subject that lay next their hearts ; and thus they won fresh followers for Jesus, and little communities were formed in various places in the Jewish land.

The work of Philip the Evangelist, one of the Seven, is especially commemorated. He went to a city in Samaria, preached Jesus there as the Messiah, and met with the success that might have been anticipated from the state of religious excitement in which he found the Samaritans.² This was a great step in advance, and a proof of Philip's freedom of spirit. Indeed, the writer of Acts himself desires us to look upon it as a step towards preaching to the gentiles ; for

¹ See p. 493.

² See p. 99.

though the Samaritans themselves claimed to be genuine Israelites, though they worshipped the Lord, practised circumcision, observed all the law of Moses, and lived in expectation of the Messianic kingdom, yet the Jews looked upon them as no better than heathen ; and what is more, there was not a Jew, there was not a member of the community, not even Philip himself, who would have thought for a moment of reckoning them among the posterity of Abraham, for whom the Messiah and his salvation were supposed to be exclusively destined. So now the narrow circle was broken through for the first time, and the approach to the Messianic kingdom thrown open to others than Jews. The honor of this decisive step belongs to Philip. Yet we must not for a moment suppose that he had definitely relinquished the idea of Israel's hereditary right to the kingdom of God, or was prepared to go forward, without shrinking, and accept and preach with full consciousness the principle of the abandonment of all privileges of birth or nationality, — the principle of equality, as opposed to the national exclusiveness and pride of the Jews. Philip's large-heartedness was fostered, as we have seen, by the freer conceptions he had embraced, and he was conscious of acting in the true spirit of the Master ;¹ but he was far from realizing the full significance of the step to which he was impelled by his love of Jesus and his zeal for the kingdom of God.

Details are wanting. Our author only cared to chronicle the fact itself. He does not even tell us the name of the city ; he simply makes his usual statement that Philip performed miracles, such as the cure of many demoniacs, out of whom the devils came with piercing shrieks, and of many maimed and crippled ones, — all which called general attention to his preaching, and caused great joy in the city.

After this we are told of another act of Philip, which bears witness to the same free spirit. The supernatural circumstances by which it is surrounded were intended to make it more striking, and perhaps clothe it with the divine sanction. An angel of the Lord, we are told, commanded Philip to leave Samaria and hasten southwards, along the least frequented of the roads from Jerusalem to Gaza. He obeyed ; and in doing so he overtook the travelling carriage of a distinguished Ethiopian, — the chamberlain and first treasurer of the Queen of Meroë, who was called (after the usual custom of these Ethiopian princesses) Candace. Now, although

¹ See p. 301.

this stranger was a heathen,—that is to say, was uncircumcised,—yet he worshipped Israel's God, and was now returning from a visit to the temple. There he sat, with a parchment-roll in his hand, reading to himself, but above his breath, as he drove along. The roll contained the prophecies of Isaiah in the Greek version, and the traveller was reading the verses that describe how the servant of the Lord is struck down without complaint or resistance.¹ Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Philip walked beside the carriage, and asked the great officer whether he understood what he was reading; and he answered that he could not understand it without further instruction, begging him at the same time to take the seat beside him and explain whether the prophet was really speaking about himself or some one else. What better opening could there have been for the Evangelist to speak of Jesus, in whom that passage of Scripture was fulfilled? He found a grateful hearer in the chamberlain; and when a few hours had sped by, he announced himself a convert, and desired to be baptized. They were close by a stream; the Ethiopian ordered the carriage to stop; the two descended, and Philip consecrated his companion as a future citizen of the kingdom of God. But, just as they were stepping out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly snatched away the preacher miraculously,² so that the other could not so much as take leave of him, but was left to continue his homeward journey full of deep joy in his new faith in Jesus. Meanwhile, Philip was transported to Ashdod, at a distance of five or six leagues, whence he journeyed through the cities near the sea-coast, preaching everywhere, till he came to Cæsarea, a city largely inhabited by heathen, where he took up his abode.

Still more important events remain. We heard just now of persecuted brethren scattered over Judæa and Samaria; but there were also many who passed the boundaries of Jewish land and went to Phœnicia, the island of Cyprus, and Antioch, the magnificent capital of Syria. Now wherever they went they preached their faith to the Jews of the place, and of course to them only. At last, however, certain Cyprians and Cyrenæans, who had formerly been attracted to Jerusalem by religious zeal, and were now expelled from it by religious rancor, settled in Antioch, and there began to speak to heathen on the subject of their faith, and to preach Jesus and his principles and kingdom to them. They experienced God's

¹ See vol. ii. pp. 420, 421.

² Compare vol. ii. pp. 140, 152.

unmistakable support and blessing we are told, so that great numbers believed, renounced their idolatry and superstition, and were converted to the Lord. They were the first-fruits of the mighty harvest that the heathen world should yield !

What we said of Philip is still more applicable here. The step was of incalculable consequence ; for the writer evidently means that these heathen were not compelled or even urged to submit to circumcision and other Jewish ordinances as a condition of their admittance. What freedom and boldness, what a fine spirit of humanity, what zeal for the cause of Jesus on the part of the preachers all this shows ! We would gladly know more of them, but have only the name of one, — Lucius the Cyrenæan, — and at most can only conjecture that Barnabas the Cyprian was another. Yet, on the other hand, we must not suppose that these men had arrived at the conviction that the Law was annulled, that the distinction between Jew and heathen was abolished, and that henceforth faith must be the only condition of admission into the kingdom of God.¹ The glory of first discovering and preaching this remains with Paul. Indeed, it would be impossible to accept the statement that a community of Grecian Jews and uncircumcised converts was formed at Antioch in any such way as would overshadow the services of Paul or rob his apostleship to the Gentiles of its originality.

Ere long we shall see the Apostle of the gentiles hurl down the wall of partition ; but meanwhile our thoughts involuntarily turn to the second great condition which made it possible to preach the gospel in Greek society, — the condition which must have moved the preachers already spoken of, and without which Paul, in spite of the might of his conviction, would have ploughed upon the rocks ! This second condition was the sense of want on the part of the heathen world itself. The capacity for receiving the gospel lay in the longing for a deeper knowledge of the truth, a purer worship of the Deity, a mightier support for the moral life, and a firmer foundation for hope in the future than the ancient and superannuated religions could give.² Heathendom was ready to hear of the God of Jesus and the kingdom Jesus came to establish.

Had not the gentile world been straining for deliverance, how could the religion of a crucified Jew have found acceptance with it ? The heathen then did not fail on their side to press for admission ; and it was to this pressure perhaps,

¹ Compare Galatians ii. 13.

² See p. ?

more than to any thing else, that they owed their participation in the kingdom of God. This fact is set before our eyes in a miraculous story, from which we may perhaps make out the views of the liberal school before Paul as to the conversion of heathen. We will give it as it appears in the first Gospel, and therewith close this chapter, as we opened it, with an emblematic scene :—

Jesus was once journeying in a heathen land (Phoenicia¹). A woman of the country came to him and cried : “ Have pity on me, Lord, thou son of David ! my daughter is grievously afflicted by a demon.” But Jesus did not answer a word. Then his disciples came to him and said : “ Send her away, for she is shouting after us ; ” upon which he said : “ I am only sent to the lost sheep of Israel’s house.” But then the woman fell at his feet and cried imploringly : “ Lord ! help me ! ” Jesus still refused. “ We may not take the children’s bread,” he answered, “ and throw it to the dogs ; ” on which she said : “ No, Lord ! but the dogs may have the fragments that fall from the table of their masters.” Then Jesus yielded. “ O woman ! great is your faith,” he exclaimed ; “ your prayer is granted.” And the sufferer was healed.

The meaning of this story, which Mark reproduces with sundry modifications, designed for the most part to soften the harshness of the expressions, is easy to perceive. Against its literal truth we might urge the title of “ son of David ” given to Jesus by a heathen woman ; the implication that his mission was to cure diseases, and that it would prejudice his own nation if he helped a heathen who happened to be thrown in his way ; the repulsive harshness and national arrogance here attributed to the Christ ; and, finally, the performance of the cure at a distance. All these difficulties disappear if we accept it symbolically. The Phœnician woman becomes the heathen world beseeching the Christ to rescue her children from the power of Satan.² In vain ! The salvation of the kingdom of God is only offered to the children of the household (to Israel), not to the dogs (the heathen).³ But she perseveres ; she is content if she may but pick up the chance fragments that fall within her grasp ; and her perseverance wins the day.

Observe that this healing from a distance,—that is to say, this benefit conferred upon the heathen world by the emissaries of Jesus and not by him in person,⁴—is as it were wrung

¹ See pp. 281 ff.

² Acts xxvi. 18 ; compare pp. 322–324.

³ See p. 389 ; Matthew vii. 6 ; 2 Peter ii. 22.

⁴ See p. 309.

from him, that is from his community ; and that as yet there is not the least idea of placing the heathen on the same level with the Jews. But at the same time the longing for salvation on the part of the heathen gives the actual proof of their equality, nay, their superiority for a time, to the unbelieving Israel. We are now to see the Apostle of the heathen vindicating their rights, and realizing the presentiment of Jesus.¹

CHAPTER IV.

THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES.

GALATIANS I. 18-20; ACTS IX. 1-30.

WHOM have we to thank for the fact that the name and the gospel of the crucified Galilean were preached throughout the ancient world, triumphing alike over supreme indifference and furious hostility, over the brilliance of sarcastic wit and the bitterness of deadly hatred? Whose fault is it that the purpose of Jesus himself, who labored to found the kingdom of God and not "a religion," was thwarted by the rise under his name of a new and separate religion,—of the Christian church and the church's doctrines? One answer serves for both these questions, for they indicate the twin results of the rise and work of Paul.

Of Paul! After Jesus, to whom he himself declared that he owed all he was and all he had, we surely are acquainted with no mightier personality than Paul's. By turns received with acclamation and loaded with scorn and hatred, Paul, with his giant spirit and his restless energy, whether comprehended or not, has directly or indirectly dominated the development of Christianity; and to this very day the great majority of believers have not derived their knowledge of the Master and the influence it exercises upon them direct from the fountain head,—that is to say from the Jesus of history himself,—but rather from the channels cut out by Paul in his conception and preaching of the Christ.

And now that we come to speak of Paul we have firmer ground beneath our feet than we have hitherto trodden; for we have access to genuine and perfectly trustworthy sources

¹ See pp. 301 ff., 235, 236.

of information about him ; and consequently his image stands before us in much sharper and clearer outlines than that of Jesus. Though many details, especially concerning his outward lot, are doubtful or unknown, yet his own words give us adequate knowledge of his character, his doctrine, his work, his struggles, and much else of extreme importance.

To begin with, we ask who he was ; and we hear from his own mouth¹ that he was in every respect of purely Jewish origin,—a fact to which he evidently attached no little weight before his conversion. Neither he nor any of his forefathers had belonged to the Greek-speaking Jews ; from father to son they had all been Hebrews. Still less was there a single drop of foreign blood in his veins which could give a pretext for disputing his claim to be a true Israelite and member of God's chosen people. He could show the highest patent of nobility in his descent from Abraham, and the title it gave him as a son of the promise, an heir of the Messianic salvation.

Sprung from the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, he had been brought up in strict and stern compliance with the ordinances of the Law and the tradition, for which he early displayed unbounded reverence and burning zeal. He threw himself with heart and soul into the Pharisaic camp. We gather from the line of argument adopted in his letters, and from the scholastic learning which he had at his command, that he was educated as a Rabbi ; in which case he would follow the usual custom of learning a trade, which subsequently enabled him to provide for his own support on his missionary journeys. We think of him as a city child, unacquainted with the free, fresh scenes of Nature ; and we know that he could not boast of a powerful frame, an impressive cast of features, or other external advantages.

On the other hand, he could afterwards declare that concerning the Law he had been irreproachable in his observance of the commandments, and was prominent as a zealot among his contemporaries and associates. He was a specially ardent champion for the maintenance of the oral law, and against every thing that might infringe on its authority. Not content with all this, he was stirred by his zeal for Judaism to take a prominent part in the persecution of the community of Jesus. The Master himself he had probably never

¹ Romans xi. 1; 2 Corinthians xi. 22; Galatians i. 13, 14; Philippians iii. 4-6 : compare pp. 35, 90, 91, 93, 94, 277, 505.

seen, and perhaps had heard little and taken no special notice of him during his life. He certainly took no part in his death, and was not present on the occasion. It follows, therefore, that he was not in the City of the Temple at the Passover in the year 35 A.D. At what period he became acquainted with the sect of Nazarenes we do not know; but whenever it was, he was so deeply shocked in his inmost soul by the preaching of the Crucified, that, when the false doctrine spread and the Greek Jews that it counted among its adherents began to attract attention, he heartily rejoiced in the violent measures taken against them, and even gave them a powerful stimulus himself. He repeatedly calls himself a persecutor of the community,—a devastator of the faith.

So much we learn directly or indirectly from his own letters. The writer of Acts gives several additional particulars, telling us that he bore the Jewish name of Saul as well as his better-known name of Paul; that he was a tent-maker,—a trade, observe, which was poorly paid, but left the mind free for deep reflection,—and that he had inherited the rights of Roman citizenship¹ from his father. How the latter had acquired them we are not told. But when the same author tells us that Paul was born in Tarsus, in Cilicia, it is difficult to reconcile the statement with the Apostle's own repeated assertion that he was a Hebrew,—a Hebrew born of Hebrews. The celebrated ecclesiastical father, Jerome, noticed this contradiction, and therefore followed another tradition which pointed to the Jewish city of Giscala as the Apostle's birthplace, and supposed that he had removed to Tarsus as a child. This only very partially removes the difficulty. It makes very little difference, however, whether he saw the light at Tarsus or not; for though this city was a considerable place, rejoicing in special immunities,—a centre of commercial industry, a seat of philosophy and general culture sometimes mentioned in a breath with Athens and Alexandria, and the cradle of sundry men of distinction,—yet in any case Paul's education and development were quite uninfluenced by Greek culture. He was a stranger to Greek philosophy, literature, and eloquence, and even after he had spent years in the society of Greeks he still had great difficulty in writing their language, and nearly always dictated his letters.² Finally, we are told in Acts that he was edu-

¹ See p. 2.

² Galatians vi. 11; Philemon verse 19; Romans xvi. 22; 1 Corinthians xvi. 21.

cated in Jerusalem, in the school of Gamaliel, and was still young at the time of Stephen's martyrdom. Against this it may be urged that he shows no signs of having paid any attention to the Baptist, and was not at Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified.¹

What changed this persecutor of the community into the most zealous of all the preachers of that faith which he had formerly laid waste? To this great question we have unfortunately no direct answer from the man himself. He simply tells us in general terms that God had destined and formed him from his birth for the Apostolate, and emphatically denies that he was brought to better thoughts, or that his views of the gospel had been determined or modified after his conversion by the influence, the preaching, or the explanations of any Apostle, Evangelist, or other believer whatever. We also note that he was at Damascus when the great revolution in his faith took place; and that when Jesus, whom he had previously regarded as a blasphemer, became to him the Christ, the Son of God, he very soon, if not immediately, felt impelled to take up the mission to the heathen as his special task.²

The book of Acts, on the contrary, goes into detail upon this point. So deeply does the author feel the importance of vindicating against the Jewish-Christians Paul's immediate call to his office by the Christ, that he gives the story of his conversion three times over,—once in the course of the history, and twice afterwards in addresses which he puts upon the lips of Paul.³

When Saul had witnessed the stoning of the first martyr, says the book of Acts, he was filled with rage against the community; broke in upon the faithful from house to house, armed with the high priest's authority; dragged men, and even women, before the authorities to be hurled into prison; rejoiced when they were put to death; had many of them scourged in the synagogues, or compelled them to revile Jesus as a false prophet; and even followed up the persecution into foreign cities. Thus, he asked and obtained a written commission from the high priest or the Sanhedrim to present to the chiefs of the synagogues at Damascus, eight days' journey from Jerusalem; hoping, with such credentials, to succeed in bringing any followers of the Nazarene he

¹ Philemon verse 9.

² Galatians i. 12, 15-17.

³ Acts ix. 1 ff., xxii. 3 ff., xxvi. 9 ff.

might find there, whether man or woman, in chains to Jerusalem. But as he was on his way, and had almost reached Damascus, there suddenly shone and streamed about him a light before which the blaze of the mid-day sun grew pale. It was the divine glory that surrounds the exalted Christ. He fell to the earth and heard a voice cry : “ Saul, Saul ! why persecutest thou me ? ” “ Who art thou, Lord ? ” he replied in terror. “ I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest,” said the voice. “ It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks ; ” (that is to say, “ It is vain for thee to endeavor to resist my power, like an obstinate bullock kicking against the ox-goad.”) “ Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do ? ” he asked. “ Stand up ! ” was the reply, “ and go into Damascus, where the task laid on thee by God will be told thee.” Then Saul arose, but the heavenly glory had struck him blind, and his companions had to lead him by the hand.

They took him into the city, to what was called the Straight Street, and to the house of a certain Judas, where he spent three days in contemplation and prayer, in total blindness, and too much depressed, ashamed, and bewildered to eat or drink. Then, as he prayed, he had a vision in which a certain Ananias, a follower of Jesus, came to him to lay his hands upon him and restore his sight. At the very same moment the Lord appeared to this Ananias himself, who was a man of rigid piety according to the Law, and was held in high esteem by the Jews of Damascus. He commanded him to go to Saul, and told him in what street and house he would find him. Ananias pleaded that Saul was a furious persecutor ; but the Lord only repeated his command the more emphatically, and assured him that his former adversary was to be a chosen instrument for the preaching of the Christ to heathen, to kings, and to Israelites, and would brave sufferings both manifold and heavy in the cause. Ananias obeyed, came to Saul in the name of Jesus, and laid his hands upon him. Then it seemed as if scales fell from the eyes of Saul ; and when Ananias told him of his mission, and the glorious task that awaited him, he rose up and was baptized, and then refreshed himself with food.

So far the author of Acts. We have combined his three narratives into one, so as to miss nothing ; but may notice that he shows great carelessness in saying on one occasion that Saul’s companions fell down with him to the earth on seeing the heavenly glory, and on another that they stood still in bewilderment ; on one that they heard the voice but

saw no one, on another that they saw the light but heard no one speak. In other respects the emphasis falls upon different speakers in the narrative, according to the audience and the purpose which have drawn it forth.¹ As for its credibility, we cannot believe that the Christ really appeared to Paul and conversed with him, as the author represents, and struck him blind by his glory. Again, we know upon Paul's own authority that the part here played by Ananias, if not his very existence, is a pure fiction; for he tells us expressly that no man whatsoever exercised any influence upon this crisis of his life. But in spite of all this it is not impossible that a trustworthy tradition lies at the foundation of this story of the vision near Damascus,—a tradition drawn from Paul's own preaching, but afterwards elaborated and embellished; for we may regard it as almost certain that he saw the exalted Christ in a vision at the time of his conversion.² Paul himself of course believed that the Christ had come in person from above, had revealed himself to him, and suddenly arrested him in his career; but we, on the other hand, feel bound to attempt the explanation both of the vision and the conversion from Paul's own inner life. The materials are supplied by his own letters, and especially the information they give us as to his general conceptions and style of argument, his character and physical constitution, his relations with the Twelve, and other such circumstances.

Let us give a concise account of what we gather from these sources.

Why was Paul such a furious persecutor of the community? Could he conceive of any more joyful and glorious news than that which had called the community into life and still sustained it, to which its spokesmen and the very fact of its existence bore ceaseless and emphatic testimony? Could any thing be more welcome to him than the news that he who was to mount the throne of the Messiah had come in very truth, as the fullest pledge³ of the instant dawn of the Golden Age? No! He could conceive no news more glorious,—if only he could have believed it! But the Nazarene had died upon the cross, and thereby had proved himself a lying prophet. Before as well as after Paul's conversion the death of Jesus

¹ See chap. x. p. 611.

² 1 Corinthians xv. 8, ix. 1; compare 2 Corinthians xii. 1.

³ See p. 64.

on the cross was unquestionably the one point upon which the whole thing seemed to him to hinge.¹ One would judge from his letters that Jesus only came for the sake of being crucified and raised up from the shadow-land ; and just as the cross was afterwards his glory, so it was his one great stumbling-block while he still retained his Jewish Messianic beliefs. Surely this preaching of a Messiah who had suffered an infamous death must have appeared to him as something worse than an absurdity, — as a positive abomination. Even the Twelve of course saw that the cross was in direct contradiction with the traditional doctrine of retribution and the national expectations ; and the truth was that they had never been able to remove this contradiction. All they could do was to throw the blame upon the people and their leaders ; declare that the resurrection had annulled the cross ; appeal to the Scripture in proof that it had all been preordained and foretold by God ;² and probably add that the death of Jesus had been a sacrifice of atonement for the people's want of obedience³ (as indicated in the prophecy about the servant of the Lord), while at the same time it was the sacrifice to initiate the glorious kingdom of God.⁴ But Paul was far too keen-sighted and deep-thinking a theologian to be content with so superficial and undecided a view. If we put ourselves into the Jewish attitude of mind, — that is to say, if we see and endeavor to demonstrate a special deed of God and therefore a special divine purpose in such an event, — we shall soon perceive that a philosophic nature like Paul's, accustomed to weigh and to think out the consequences of every thing, could not rest in such evasions. For if they represented the case truly, then this death, the death of the Son of God upon the cross, would after all be largely accidental and arbitrary, and the Christ would have died without any sufficient cause, — would have died *for nothing*.⁵ Paul saw that whoever accepted this Nazarene whom the Law had condemned and loaded with its curse placed himself outside the Law by that very fact, and renounced his allegiance to it. The Greek-speaking members of the community were already beginning to show what it must come to. In fact, the persecutor had at least a presentiment that if the crucified leader were really

¹ 1 Corinthians i. 18, 23, 24, ii. 2; Galatians vi. 14, *et seq.*

² See pp. 465, 475, 486, 494–496, 507, 508, 516.

³ 1 Corinthians xv. 3; Revelation v. 9, *et seq.*; compare vol. ii. pp. 420–425, 516.

⁴ See p. 416.

⁵ Galatians ii. 21.

the Christ, then the great and vital question, “ How am I to be justified before God ? ” would have to receive a very different answer from the one it had hitherto met. Not, “ By strict observance of the Law of the Lord,” but, “ By accepting in faith what God has given me in this death.” In that case the cross would open a new way to salvation ; and God would have said to men on Golgotha : “ To accomplish your own justification is an impossibility. Here I myself am offering the great and only sacrifice of atonement not only for individual shortcomings, but as a substitute for your own righteousness.” In that case it would be impossible and impious to abide by the Law, for whoever sought salvation by the Law would be admitting that his Messiah had died for nothing. And what must this lead to ? Any one who became an adherent of the Crucified, in giving up salvation by the Law must give up every thing, including all his national privileges, with it,— for he must look upon Jew and heathen as alike before God ; he must regard the partition wall between them as thrown down ; he could have no possible reason for confining the Christ and his salvation to Abraham’s posterity, which would have no special merit more than others ; for the divine grace would be the sole means of deliverance to all alike. In a word, the preaching of a crucified Messiah drew with it the overthrow of the whole Jewish religion. Away then with so pestilent a heresy !

Such were the thoughts which rose before the mind of Paul ; not at first of course, in perfect clearness and in all their scope, but more as a presentiment, vague at first, but gradually gaining distinctness. What choice had he but to persecute ? And yet, after all, was it so absolutely and obviously impossible that God had really sent a new and higher revelation in this death upon the cross ? Had he himself found peace, real peace, in this righteousness of the Law ? Did it quench his burning thirst for truth and holiness, give rest to his tossed and harassed soul, and reconcile him with his God ? Alas, it did not ! His unswerving loyalty to truth, his intense religious feeling, forced this answer from him. And then as he fought against these Nazarenes, not only with outward force, but with the weapons of argument and Scripture, as he stood up against them in the synagogues to drive them to bay with his incisive arguments, new difficulties rose before him. There in the Scripture stood the suffering servant of the Lord by the side of the mighty son of David ! He himself yearned for the Messianic salvation ; but he well knew that it

could only be given to a righteous people : and was Israel either righteous now, or in the way of becoming so? Alas, no! Then what if God — inasmuch as the previously offered and accepted means of salvation, namely the Law, had proved inadequate — had really opened this new way? What if the great Redeemer and Comforter, before appearing in his glory, had indeed died a death of atonement, and so had opened the kingdom of God to the unrighteous, and put all who believed in him into their true relationship towards God by the force of this their faith? And did not all that he heard of Jesus from the mouth of his followers, his golden sayings and his holy life, his gentleness and power, his self-consecration and obedience, make an impression of perfect righteousness upon him which he could not shake off? No! it was impossible. The Law and the cross were and must remain in irreconcilable contradiction. It was impossible ; for it would involve the annulling of the dispensation ordained by God for salvation, and the cancelling of Israel's election. But then if for a moment Jesus were supposed really to be the Messiah, would not the cross be as much ordained by God for salvation as the Law had been? And was it so certain that the calling of the heathen was no part of the divine scheme? Well, be all that as it might, what really settled the whole matter was that the cross itself proved this Nazarene not to be the Messiah. That cross was an unmistakable judgment of God against him ; was the irrefragable proof, which all might read, that God had rejected him. Now his own disciples admitted that all this would be unanswerable had not God raised him up again! "But," said they, "he rose again and we saw him! Peter, the Twelve, more than five hundred brethren at once, James, all the Apostles. He appeared to us in glory from on high!" A lie! cried the persecutor. But could he really abide by this answer? A lie? There was nothing of the impostor in what he had picked up or heard about the Master, nor was there any appearance of deceit in what he saw of the disciples. Suppose he really had risen! Then all would be clear enough. Why should not it be true?

No, it could not be true! He would not suffer the thought for a single moment. His zeal for the Law and the tradition waked with fresh force within him. Away with these heretics! Search them out! force them to revile this Jesus! and if they will not, hurl them into prison and condemn them to death! His fury was redoubled by the very fact of his vacil-

lation. Now Paul was a man of nervous and excitable temperament,—an impetuous and fiery spirit in a weak body. More than once, in times of great perplexity or at dangerous crises, his system was so overwrought that he became deaf and blind to the external world, while visions or revelations were for a time vouchsafed to him, and utter prostration subsequently paid the price of the strain.¹ Moreover, this unwearied and impetuous zealot, for what he held to be the truth of God, was of any thing but a cruel disposition. On the contrary, the utmost tenderness and depth of feeling and the truest humanity were a part of his character, and he must have done violence to his own nature in becoming a persecutor.² And when he witnessed the joyful security, the exalted might of faith, the peaceful courage in the face of death which characterized the martyrs,³ how could he help being constantly shaken in his purpose and his conviction? Suppose this Jesus really had risen again and appeared to his friends! In that case he (Paul) had been fighting against God up to that hour, and was fighting against Him still! But it could not be! He must not and would not admit the thought! Meanwhile, as he set his teeth against the nascent conviction, the image of the risen Master, shining with the glory of heaven, laid hold of his imagination in spite of himself. The strain increased. Determined to smother his own doubts, he journeyed to the distant Damascus to persecute the fugitives even there! On his way, all that he had thought and lived and fought through rushed once more upon his soul. That question, “What if he really did?” forced itself into his mind, do what he would. The witness of the Scripture; the accounts he had heard of the Nazarene; the experiences of his own heart; the fervid longing of his own soul; the invincible faith and courage of the disciples; the scenes of terror which he himself was on the point of renewing; the image of the glorified One as he was said to have appeared,—all these things chased each other through his brain. This resurrection! It was there that the whole matter lay! Damascus was already before him; but the tension had now reached its limit! It was as if the heavenly glory burst upon his straining eye, while the words broke upon his ear: “Saul, Saul! why persecutest thou me?”

The Apostle of the Gentiles was born!

¹ Compare Galatians ii. 2; 2 Corinthians x. 10, xii. 1 ff.

² 2 Corinthians xi. 29; Romans ix. 2, 3.

³ See p. 508.

We have endeavored to throw light upon Paul's gospel ;¹ that is to say, his characteristic and original insight into the Christian truth by his conversion, and again to explain his conversion by the nature of his gospel. The truth of the explanation, considered as a mental history, is guaranteed in its main features by this harmony. Paul's persecuting zeal shows that from the first he perceived that belief in a crucified Messiah was incompatible with the Jewish religion. And his special call to preach the Son of God to the heathen is an equally strong proof of the same fact.

But we must not infer that when the great change had taken place within him he was at once perfectly clear as to his faith,—knew what to think upon every point,—and, in a word, had arrived at such consistent and satisfactory views that he was prepared to preach the Christ immediately. It was impossible ! The shock was so violent, the revolution seemed so enormous, the necessity of recovering himself—of reckoning with his own past self, of finding his bearings in this new religious world — was so great, that he must certainly have withdrawn for some considerable time. For, in the first place, much of what we have said as to the significance and consequences of faith in the Crucified may not have risen before the mind of Paul with any sharpness of outline until after his conversion ; and, at any rate, as long as he rejected the faith many of its consequences can only have been dimly felt by him ; nor can they have combined into a distinct and definite conception until that faith had become his own, and had been fortified in his heart against all assaults of doubt. Hitherto he had regarded these things with a hostile eye, and had only forced them to their results to show how bad they were. It was very different to think them over and think them through with sympathetic earnestness, now that they had acquired the intensest fascination for him. And since he never doubted for a moment, to the very last, in the divine origin of the Law and the prophets, he must have been keenly sensible of a difficulty which imperatively demanded a solution. It was the difficulty of bringing God's ancient revelation into its true connection with the new one, and so explaining the significance and intention of the first as to make its transitory office consistent with its divine character. Only by solving this problem could he gain a conviction as firm, as compact, and as completely rounded as the one he had relinquished.

¹ Romans ii. 16, xvi. 25, 2 Corinthians iv. 3, xi. 4; Galatians i. 11, 12, 6, ii. 2. 7.

At the same time he knew very well that it would be useless to seek the light he needed from men, -- from flesh and blood, as he expressed it.¹ That was certain. He was not at all the man to surrender himself to another's guidance and walk by another's light. Besides, even had it been otherwise, he could not possibly have expected any help from the Twelve; for they still failed to see even as much as his eyes, quickened by hostility, had discerned before his conversion, when he was still a persecutor. They still failed to see that whoever became an adherent of the Crucified had broken with the Law, and must regard the cross as the greatest deed of God. So he left the busy Damascus and betook himself to Arabia, to some quiet place in the neighborhood. Here he remained a considerable time, and the interval of repose bore rich fruits for his inner life; so that when he returned to active work he had in truth become a new man, and was fully equipped with his new conviction. During the next five-and-twenty years he was far from standing still. He expanded and consolidated his views in the midst of his restless activity, and indeed in consequence of it, and more especially in the course of the hot controversies in which he was involved. But it was now that the great revolution took place, and that the formation of his views and character alike was completed in principle and in essence.

We must remember that this transition involved a complete change in the foundations alike of his religious and his moral life, and therefore an enormous strain, not only upon his intellectual but still more upon his moral powers. Was it not a sublime resolve, involving the stern suppression of all self-love and self-satisfaction, thus to break with his own past, unconditionally to relinquish all the results of his services, all in which he had hitherto gloried, to which he had devoted himself with heart and soul, and in which he had excelled so many of his companions, henceforth to find shame and humiliation in the prosecuting zeal that had been his glory?² The substance of his preaching henceforth ran: "Not by the Law, but by grace, not by works, but by faith, we are saved; and therefore all distinction between Jew and heathen is henceforth abolished!" And this shows that the Jew within him had died for ever; but not, we may be sure, without causing him the deepest trouble and affliction of soul, — not without a long and desperate wrestle for the very life.

¹ Galatians i. 16, 17; compare p. 319.

² Philippians iii. 4 ff.; 2 Corinthians xi. 21 ff.; Galatians i. 13, 14.

All this he ascribed to the influence of the cross upon him. His whole soul turned to the Christ who had suffered himself to be nailed to the cross in obedience to God and in love to mankind, and had taken pity upon him, his enemy and persecutor. Nay, he felt so closely bound to him that it was as if he had himself been crucified with him, or in his person ; had died with him to the Law, to the world, and to sin ; had risen with him from the regions of the dead, henceforth a new man, living like the Christ, and with him, to God alone. He felt himself in such close communion with Christ that it was as if his former self — the self-seeking Jew — had gone, and as if Christ himself lived henceforth in him.¹ Did not the spirit of Christ — and what was that but Christ himself ? — work in him and control him more and more ? The life he now lived was in truth a new, a holy, an eternal life, free from the Law with its restraints and curse. He no longer knew any thing of a Lawgiver in heaven, whom he must serve in trembling, but only of a Father whose grace was his all, love of whom was now the principle of his obedience and of his whole moral life, whose Spirit dwelt in him as the pledge of a blessed future. The Law could not form man to obedience, for man's carnal nature — the fountain and the seat of sin — made the Law powerless. But when Christ laid aside upon the cross the flesh, the carnal nature, which he had received at his birth, then upon that same cross the carnal nature of all who should cleave to him and become one with him was as good as slain, and with the flesh the power of sin was destroyed. Then they might not, and could not, fail any longer to live for God by the Spirit.² Thus the whole inner life of Paul hinged upon the contrast between Law and faith, sin and grace, flesh and spirit, Adam and Christ.³ Adam was the representative of the old, carnal, sinful race of man ; Christ of the new, spiritual, and holy race that would be revealed in all its glory at the coming of the kingdom of God. To Christ, this second Adam, Paul ascribed a pre-existence in heaven, as the Son of God or type of humanity, before he took upon himself the carnal nature in order to redeem the posterity of Adam.⁴ Like all the believers, he expected him to return from heaven shortly, to complete the work of salvation. Meanwhile, it was his task to preach this Christ to the world,

¹ Galatians vi. 14, ii. 19, 20; 2 Corinthians v. 14 ff.; Romans vi. 4 ff.

² Romans viii. 1 ff.; 2 Corinthians i. 22; Galatians v. 5.

³ 1 Corinthians xv. 21 ff., 45 ff.; Romans v. 12 ff.

⁴ Galatians iv. 4; 1 Corinthians xv. 47; 2 Corinthians viii. 9; Romans viii.

³ Philippians ii. 5 ff.

especially to the heathen world, hitherto deprived of the glad tidings,—so that when he should come he might find the world prepared and believing.

How long Paul stayed in Arabia we do not know; but it must have been several months, and perhaps a year or two. He was probably residing all this time in some village on the great plain that stretches south-west of the river Euphrates, and is known as the Arabian desert. There he supported himself by his trade, while his heart and head were ceaselessly busied with deep speculations, with the examination of the Scripture, with the internal conflict of his soul, and with prayer to God. As soon as he had come to a clear and definite conclusion, he came back from his retirement, a new man in very truth, and began the work of his Lord. He chose Damascus, the nearest great city,—Damascus which he had once before approached upon so different a mission,—as the scene of his first labors. And here for the first time, accordingly, the Christ was preached to the heathen world by a preacher who distinctly knew what he was doing, and did it on the strength of an established principle. For though Paul may have chosen the synagogue as his basis, there is no reasonable doubt that from the first he appeared as the Apostle of the heathen.¹ But it appears that before long his preaching was impeded, and his life, or at least his liberty, very seriously threatened, so that he determined to fly. He tells us himself² that the governor of King Aretas, to whose territory Damascus just then at any rate belonged, had set watches at the gates of the city to seize him. But he succeeded in reaching the house of a friend who lived on the walls; and thence, under cover of the darkness, he was let down in a basket from a window in the wall and escaped. Then he went to Jerusalem. He had not been there since his conversion, now three years ago. He had not the least intention of preaching in the city, for the field of his labors lay not there; but he desired to make acquaintance with Peter, the most prominent of the inner circle of the friends and disciples of Jesus. So he stayed with him in his own house; but he met none of the other Apostles only James the brother of Jesus, who stood with Peter at the head of the community of Jerusalem. It seems, therefore, that he kept his visit a secret, and avoided contact both with his former associates and with the community. After a visit of only fifteen days, he left his host and the City of the Temple, again to devote all his powers to his task as

¹ Galatians i. 16.

² 2 Corinthians xi. 32, 33; compare p. 122.

the Apostle of the heathen,—this time in the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

But before accompanying Paul upon his journey, we must mention that the writer of Acts gives an account of what took place after the conversion, which differs widely, and evidently not by accident, from that of the Apostle himself. He omits every thing that Paul urges in proof of his originality and independence of the Twelve. His retirement, his stay in Arabia, his three years' absence from Jerusalem, the privacy of his intercourse with Peter,—all disappear without a trace! He is made to come forward at Damascus, without any interval, and begin preaching that Jesus is the Christ. Moreover, his preaching is directed to the Jews, who are full of amazement to hear him say these things, and, since they cannot refute him, make a murderous design against his life. He escapes, as above described, and goes to Jerusalem to join the community there. But the brethren are suspicious of him until Barnabas introduces him to the Apostles, tells them how Christ appeared to the persecutor, and how he has since been preaching at Damascus. Thus introduced and recommended, he associates on intimate terms with the Twelve, preaches with them in Jerusalem and the neighborhood,¹ and directs his special efforts to the conversion of the Greek Jews; but they plot against his life, upon which the brethren safely convey him to Caesarea, and send him to his native city, Tarsus. This account, as we see at once, contradicts that of Paul himself in almost every particular; though the Apostle certifies the truth of his own statement in the most solemn manner: “As for what I am writing, behold! I declare before God that I lie not.” Elsewhere,² in a speech he puts upon the lips of Paul, the author still more evidently betrays his design of making his readers suppose that Paul did not begin preaching to the heathen at once and of his own motion, but only in consequence of the obstinate resistance of the Jews, and very much against his own desires and intentions; for he makes him say that after his conversion he returned to Jerusalem, and that as he was praying in the temple he saw the Christ, in a transport, and that he commanded him to leave the city at once, for he would not get a hearing there. He urged that, since the people of Jerusalem had known him as a furious persecutor, they could not fail to attach importance to his preaching now. But it was all in vain; he must travel far away to the heathen!

¹ Acts ix. 28 (read “coming in and going out of Jerusalem”); compare xxvi. 20.

² Acts xxii. 17-21.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST MISSION TO THE HEATHEN.

GALATIANS I. 21-24; ACTS XI. 22-30, XII. 24-XIV.; LUKE X. 1 ff., 17-20.

PAUL himself only gives us a few of the leading facts that relate to his appearing as a missionary in the regions of Syria and Cilicia,—to his preaching and his fortunes there, or in general to the opening period of his labors as the Apostle of the gentiles,—and even what he does tell us comes out for the most part incidentally. The only point upon which he lays any stress is the absolute independence which always characterized his work. He did not stand in any position of dependence whatever to the Twelve or the primitive community. He had received no commission, no instructions, no hints from them; and what is more he did not once go to Jerusalem during the whole of this period of eleven years. Very possibly he was not in any kind of communication with the believers there; for when we read that the communities of Judaea, to whom he was not so much as known by face, hearing that the former persecutor was now a preacher of faith in the Crucified, glorified God in him, we cannot help suspecting that they were but imperfectly acquainted with the substance of his preaching, for otherwise their satisfaction would have been far from unmixed. Paul informs us further that his work was richly blessed,—an unmistakable sign of the Divine approval,—so that at the close of these eleven years his gospel was spread in many quarters among the heathen, and he had established numerous communities.¹ His headquarters were at Antioch.² Of his numerous fellow-laborers he only mentions three; namely, Barnabas, Titus,—a born heathen, whom he had probably converted himself, since he certainly was not subjected either to the Law or to circumcision,—and Timotheus, a convert of his own and afterward his frequent travelling companion.³ As we go on we shall frequently meet with these three men, as well as other friends and assistants of Paul.

¹ Galatians ii. 2, 7, 8.

² Galatians ii. 11, 13.

³ Galatians ii. 1, 3, 13; 1 Corinthians iv. 17; compare 2 Corinthians ii. 13, *et seq.*

The book of Acts makes up by its fulness for the meagreness of Paul's own statements; and fortunately it contains much that we may safely accept as true concerning this period. But this does not apply to its version of the beginning of the mission; for there the originality of Paul's gospel is again obscured and his own statements contradicted. We are told that Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the primitive community, in consequence of a report that a body of converted heathen had been formed there,¹ and that he rejoiced in this extension of the gospel, and confirmed the new disciples in their faith. But as their numbers rapidly increased he went to Tarsus to find Saul, and brought him back with him to the capital of Syria, where they both took part in the meetings of the faithful for a full year, and instructed a great multitude. The interposition of Barnabas, by whose side at first Saul takes a second place, is open to almost as great suspicion here as in the passage where he is represented as introducing Saul to the Apostles; and this early interference with the community at Antioch, on the part of the believers at Jerusalem, dispatching Barnabas as their plenipotentiary, cannot be accepted with any confidence. After the end of that year, continues the author, there came certain prophets to Antioch from the City of the Temple. One of these inspired men, whose name was Agabus, foretold a universal famine. So the believers determined, each according to his means, to make contributions to alleviate the sufferings that threatened the communities in Judæa, and to send the money to their elders. Barnabas and Saul brought it over just at the time of the martyrdom of James and the imprisonment and deliverance of Peter; and when they had acquitted themselves of their task, they returned to their own sphere of labor, taking with them a certain John Mark,—probably the same who is elsewhere called the nephew of Barnabas.² It is true that in the fourth year of Claudius (44 A.D.) there was a famine in Judæa, though not all over the world; but Paul was never at Jerusalem during the whole period now under discussion. The sequel of the history will make the origin and purpose of this misrepresentation quite clear.³

But our author is perfectly right in bringing out the extreme importance of Antioch as the base and centre of Paul's work, and of the conversion of the heathen generally, in this important initial period. Here, he tells us, the disciples first

¹ See p. 517.

² See chapter x. p. 611.

² Colossians iv. 10; compare p. 500.

received the name of *Christians*; by which he means that here the gospel first detached itself from Judaism and asserted its place in the public estimation as a new and independent movement. And it is certainly a fact that whereas the earliest confessors of Jesus at Jerusalem gradually fell more and more completely under the influence of the synagogue, as we shall presently see, Antioch became the true cradle and nursery of Christianity. Here, under the influence of Paul, Christianity sprang into life as a new religion. In a certain sense this name of *Christian* owed its origin to a blunder. As *Herodian* was derived from Herod and *Pompeian* from Pompey, so *Christian* was derived from Christ, under the erroneous impression that it was a proper name; whereas it was really, of course, nothing but the Greek translation of Messiah (anointed), and simply indicates the rank of Jesus as monarch in the kingdom of God. This name was given to the believers by their heathen fellow-citizens in mockery, because they were always speaking of Christ as their lord; but they themselves soon adopted the name as a badge of honor. It was a matter of importance to the new religious movement to possess a name and a flag of its own, so to speak. Some scholars think the name must have been coined at Rome, and not at Antioch, because of the Latin termination *an*. Finally, we may remark that Antioch was the first city in the world after Rome and Alexandria, was the capital of the East, had half a million of inhabitants, and was a centre of Greek culture. It was in every way qualified for the part it had to play in the history of Christianity. But we must not suppose that the community consisted entirely of heathen, whether Greeks or Syrians, for the numerous Jewish population also contributed its share. All the believers, however, held brotherly intercourse with one another;¹ circumcision and the laws as to food and cleanliness gave place to faith; the life of love superseded the narrow worship of forms; and national exclusiveness was expelled by the common hope in the Christ and his salvation.

But now let us listen to the author of Acts without further interrupting him!

The leaders of the community—whether prophets who spoke by the Spirit in inspired words, or teachers who provided instruction—were Barnabas, Simeon Niger (that is *the black*), Lucius of Cyrene, Menahem, foster brother or play-

¹ Galatians ii. 12, 13, 16.

fellow of Herod Antipas, and Saul. Now, as they were all conscientiously performing their tasks, the command came to them by divine inspiration to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them. It was a missionary journey ; and the two were consecrated to the task by the laying on of hands with prayer and fasting.

John Mark accompanied them as their attendant, to perform baptisms and do other subordinate work ; and they embarked at Seleucia for Cyprus, the native country of Barnabas and other Christians of Antioch. They landed at Salamis, where they preached in the synagogues ; and then they travelled through the island from east to west till they came to Paphos, where the Roman governor resided. Now Sergius Paulus, who held the post of governor at the time, was a discerning man, and he summoned Paul and Barnabas into his presence and lent an ear to their preaching of Christ. But a certain Jewish magician and false prophet, Barjesus, or Elymas as he called himself (this name being the Arabic for *sage*), was staying with the governor ; and as he was afraid of losing his influence, he opposed the new comers, and tried to make the Roman adverse to the faith. But Saul rebuked the wicked deceiver with the utmost severity and struck him with temporal blindness, thereby removing the last trace of hesitation from the governor's mind. Here we may notice that Saul is henceforth called by his Roman name of Paul, as appropriate to the Apostle of the heathen, and perhaps also to commemorate the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the first distinguished heathen convert. Henceforth, too, both on this journey and afterwards, Paul becomes the principal actor.

At Paphos they embarked again and landed at Perge, in Pamphylia ; but here John deserted them and went back to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas, nothing daunted, continued their journey northward till they reached Antioch-in-Pisidia. Here they went to the synagogue upon the Sabbath, and after the passages from the Law and Prophets had been read they were invited by the superintendent to address the congregation.¹ Paul began, and reminded them of all God's benefits to Israel from the time of bondage in Egypt down to the days of David ; and then spoke of Jesus as the promised Saviour of David's house, preceded and announced by John the Baptist, and now preached to them, the Jews and proselytes of Asia. The people of Jerusalem and their leaders

¹ Compare pp. 140, 141.

had indeed condemned this Jesus, innocent as he was ; had given him to Pilate to be put to death, and had buried him. All this they had done in their ignorance, though in accordance with the predictions of the Scripture. But God had raised him up again ; he had appeared to his faithful friends, and was now being preached in that synagogue as the fulfilment of God's promises in the Psalms and in the Prophets,¹ especially by his resurrection. Through him, therefore, there was forgiveness of sins ; and in all those respects in which the law of Moses fell short of justifying man, he might be justified by God through faith in Christ. But woe to him who rejected him ! After this discourse Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue, but not till the urgent request of their hearers had drawn from them a promise to renew their preaching on the following Sabbath. Many Jews and proselytes went with them at once and were completely converted. Next week almost the whole city had assembled at the house of prayer. This offended the Jews, who desired to exclude the heathen from the Messianic salvation. So they opposed Paul and reviled Jesus. Then the two preachers roundly declared that, though the gospel must certainly be offered first to the Jews upon every occasion, yet since they rejected it and excluded themselves they were fully justified in preaching to the heathen, according to the ancient oracle.² What joyful words for the heathen ! Many of them believed. The word of the Lord spread through Pisidia. But the Jews induced some distinguished women of heathen birth, but Jewish faith, to incite the authorities to persecute and expel Paul and Barnabas, who shook the dust off their feet as a testimony against their obstinate opponents,³ and went on to Iconium, the capital of Lycaonia, leaving a grateful community full of promise behind them. Here again they preached in the synagogue, converted a great number of Jews and heathen, and remained a considerable time undismayed by the hostility of a host of Jews and the heathen they stirred up ; for they were encouraged by the support of the Lord who gave them power to perform signs and wonders. The city was divided into two camps, for and against the Apostles. But when they heard of a design to maltreat and stone them, they fled to two other cities of the same district, — Lystra and Derbe, — where they came forward again as bearers of the gospel.

¹ Psalms ii. 7, xvi. 10; Isaiah lv. 3.

² See pp. 182-184.

² Isaiah xlix. 6.

At Lystra an unhappy man, who had been a cripple from his birth, was among their hearers. Paul turned a searching glance upon him, saw that he had faith to be cured, and cried aloud, "Stand up on your feet!" He sprang up instantly and walked like a sound man. The multitudes, on witnessing this miraculous cure, raised the cry, "They are gods who have come down to us in human form!" They held Barnabas, for Zens (Jupiter), the highest of the gods, and Paul, as the spokesman, for Hermes (Mercury), the interpreter and messenger of the gods; but since they spoke in their own dialect the Apostles did not understand them, and only saw what they were about when the priest of Zeus brought oxen and wreaths of flowers to the gates of the temple at the entrance of the city, and was going to offer a sacrifice to them at the head of the multitudes. Deeply shocked and full of indignation, Barnabas and Paul tore their garments and rushed out among the people, exclaiming: "Stop, stop! We are men like yourselves, and our very purpose in coming to you was to make you forsake these false deities and turn to the true God, the Creator of all things, who has hitherto held back all knowledge of himself from you, but yet has not been without witness in his countless benefits to you." With such words they barely succeeded in drawing the people from their purpose. In this way general attention was immediately fixed upon them, and their labors were not fruitless. A community of believers was established, and one of its most promising members was a certain Timotheus, the uncircumcised son of a heathen and a Jewess. His pious mother and grandmother, who were both converted likewise, are elsewhere called Eunice and Lois.¹ But before long a violent end was put to the work at Lystra. Certain Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and incited the multitudes to stone Paul, after which they dragged him out of the city and left him for dead. But he still lived; and as the disciples stood around him in sorrow, he rose up and entered the city; but left it on the following morning for Derbe, in company with Barnabas. Here, too, they stayed some time and made many converts, among whom a certain Gaius is mentioned by name.²

After this they returned by the same route, strengthening their converts in the faith at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, and exhorting them to be patient under the oppression they must still expect before the kingdom of God should come. After choosing elders in each community to manage its af-

¹ Acts xvi. 1, 2; 2 Timothy i. 5.

² Acts xx. 4.

fairs, they took leave of the brethren, commanding them with prayer and fasting to the Lord in whom they now believed. Thus they returned to Perge, in Pamphylia, where they preached once more, and then took ship at Attalia for Antioch, whence they had originally been sent out on their missionary work. With thankful hearts they recounted to the assembled brethren all that God had done concerning them, and how he had permitted the heathen to embrace the faith. Then they settled for a time in Antioch again.

With two reservations we may accept this narrative as substantially true. The first reservation refers to the miracles; the second to Paul's method as a missionary. The miracles are not mere involuntary embellishments of the story; they are something else and something more. It is a part of the scheme of the book of Acts deliberately to ascribe to Paul, on these and subsequent occasions, the same or similar miracles to those which have already been ascribed to Peter. The judgment upon Elymas corresponds to that upon Ananias, the cure of the cripple at Lystra to that of the beggar at the gate Beautiful.¹ This remark will be found to throw light upon many details, alike in what we have already heard and in what is still to come. For instance, Peter, as we shall presently see,² had to contend with a sorcerer and to reject divine honors, just as Paul does here. Again, Paul's method in preaching is misrepresented with equal deliberation. In the first place he is made the emissary of others, and at first subordinate to Barnabas, — he who took such pride in his independence of all human authority! But it is far more important yet to observe that the discourses put into his mouth are entirely without the strongly-marked peculiarities of his very characteristic style and spirit. There is nothing distinctively Pauline in them. Even upon the single occasion when he is made to speak of the truly Pauline doctrine of justification, a more or less marked Jewish-Christian coloring is given to his words.³ But the most important point of all is, that, throughout this narrative and the whole book of Acts, Paul is made to follow the fixed rule of addressing himself to the Jews first, and never feels at liberty to go to the heathen until the Jews have rejected him, — he who, according to the genuine sources of information, was profoundly conscious of being called distinctly as the Apostle to the heathen, and would no

¹ Compare p. 537 with p. 491, and p. 539 with p. 494.

² Acts viii. 18 ff., x. 25, 26; see chapters x. p. 611, and vi. p. 544.

³ Compare p. 537 with p. 525.

longer hear of any distinction between Jew and Gentile, or any privilege of the former over the latter!¹ These departures from the historical facts are eminently suited to reveal the character of the Acts, the true significance of this book, and the prevailing current of feeling in the post-apostolic age.

In other respects there is no reason to doubt the fidelity of the account of this journey. A trustworthy tradition doubtless lies at its foundation, especially as regards the principal places which Paul and Barnabas visited. The time occupied by the expedition must have been many months, and may have been several years, but we have no longer the means of determining it. That the missionaries started from Antioch with a special view to the conversion of the heathen needs no further proof than is supplied by their names; for Barnabas, too, is expressly called an Apostle of the heathen by Paul himself.² Of course they did not neglect the Jews, and the synagogue often furnished them with an advantageous point of departure; but the main purpose and the main result of the enterprise was the conversion of heathen upon a large scale.

Such then was the result of Paul's appearance as a preacher, the fruit of his many years of toil in the regions of Syria and Cilicia.³ The preaching of Christ to the heathen world was an accomplished fact; not simply a local phenomenon of an exceptional and accidental character, but the bold and widespread embodiment of a principle thoroughly worked out.

This is a fact of incalculable importance. Not only was the religious truth in the possession of which Israel rejoiced now preached to the heathen world and accepted by it, as the noblest prophets had foreseen; but that peculiar heritage of Israel, that exclusive national privilege, the right of citizenship in the community of the Golden Age, was thrown open to the heathen on a footing of full equality of rights and privileges with the seed of Abraham. Nay, ere long the stubbornness of the Jews was even destined to put them behind the heathen! The point upon which the special stress must be laid is the fact that these heathen were not required to embrace Judaism; for the gospel, though an Israelitish shoot, was grafted upon a foreign stem. The belief in God's unity,

¹ Acts xvii. 2, xiii. 46 ff., xviii. 6, xxviii. 26 ff.; compare Galatians i. 16, ii. 2, 7, 8, iii. 28; Romans i. 14, iii. 21 ff., *et seq.*

² Galatians ii. 9.

³ Compare Acts xv. 23, 41.

the ancient principle of His holiness, the new principle of His love, and the hope of His kingdom were shaken free from the religious formalities and the whole religious law of the Jews, and were preached to the heathen. This Israelitish shoot was of necessity modified by being grafted on another stem, and the Christ assumed a fresh character for the peoples who were strangers to the expectation of the Messiah, the Son of God. In a word, a new religion sprang into existence. The Græco-Roman world had conceived a fresh germ of life; the regeneration of mankind had begun; the new age had broken!

This fact was destined to assume ever greater proportions and bring powers ever new to the work. The agents themselves, meanwhile, were profoundly convinced that they were not advancing on their own impulse, in their own name, or on their own authority, but were commissioned by the Christ. This conviction, which was evidently well founded up to a certain point,¹ translated itself after the manner of the times² into a story about Jesus himself. When the Twelve had shown their incapacity,³ so we read in the third Gospel, Jesus appointed seventy others, after the number of the nations of the heathen world, and sent them out, two by two, as he had formerly sent out the Twelve,⁴ to every city and village, to prepare for his coming. The appointment and sending out of these disciples is recorded by the Evangelist at the beginning of the missionary journey of Jesus through Samaria; that is to say, at the beginning of his labors among those who were not Jews. This combination is very characteristic and very happily conceived, though as a fact the mission of the Seventy and the journey through Samaria are both equally unhistorical.⁵ Luke further transfers to these Seventy the words which Jesus really uttered to the Twelve when he spoke of the great harvest, of the lack of laborers for which God must make provision, of his disciples being like lambs among wolves, and especially of the conduct they must observe upon their journeys.⁶ Moreover, Luke adds a few fresh precepts, — that they are not to waste their time upon the way in mere courtesies, for there is much to do; that wherever they go they are to eat what is set before them, the food and drink of the heathen, without troubling themselves about the Jewish laws concerning food and cleanliness.⁷ Then,

¹ See pp. 292 ff.

² Compare pp. 308, 309, 518 ff.

³ See pp. 190 ff., and 351 f.

⁴ See p. 182.

⁵ See pp. 309, 310.

⁶ See pp. 177, 182, 184, 397, 398.

⁷ See pp. 278–281, and Galatians ii. 12; 1 Corinthians x. 27.

Again, Luke makes Jesus declare in one breath with that cry of woe over Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum,¹ that the rejection of the Seventy is equivalent to the rejection of the Christ himself; and when they return from their missionary efforts, he expressly points them out as the men to whom it is given to know the secrets of the gospel hidden to others, to whom the knowledge of the Father is vouchsafed, and who taste the blessings of salvation which prophets and kings had longed in vain to taste.² Finally, we read the following account of their initial success, of the battle which they had to wage, and the divine power which supported them:—

They returned to their Master in triumph, and told him how the demons had fled from those they possessed at the preaching of the Christ; upon which the Master prepared them for a terrible resistance, but at the same time reassured them. “I saw Satan,” he cried, “dart like a flash of lightning from his realm of air³ down to the earth! But as for you, I have given you power to trample upon serpents and scorpions⁴ and the whole army of the Evil One, without suffering any hurt or injury. And yet rejoice, not because the demons are forced to yield to you, but because your names are written down by God!” When we remember that the heathen world was held to be the devil’s territory, and the false gods were looked upon as demons who ruled over their worshippers, we can well understand that the work of the preachers among the heathen was described as a conflict with Satan, and that the conversion of the heathen, both here and elsewhere, is presented under the form of exorcism or the cure of demoniacs.⁵ But in all this toil the certainty of sharing the blessings of the kingdom of God, which must be expected ere long, remained the richest source of strength, of comfort, and of joy.

Hitherto we have only mentioned or seen at work some few of these “Seventy,” these messengers to the heathen: first, Philip and the preachers at Antioch; then Paul and Barnabas, Titus and Timothy. In addition to them we shall soon greet other laborers; but the first place can never be disputed with that great originator whose rich spirit and deep affections gave birth to the gospel for the heathen, and he must ever retain his indisputable claim to the title of honor, — *the Apostle of the Gentiles.*

¹ See p. 259.

² See pp. 259, 190, 191, 162.

³ Ephesians ii. 2.

⁴ Psalm xcii. 13.

⁵ See p. 518; Revelation ix. 20; 1 Corinthians x. 20; 2 Corinthians iv. 4; compare p. 134.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COLLISION OF THE TWO PARTIES.

GALATIANS II.; ACTS XV.

WE must now return to the community at Jerusalem. For fifteen years or more it had held its own and had even increased, in spite of more than one fierce persecution. Meanwhile various other communities had been founded elsewhere on Jewish soil, chiefly by the zealous and successful labors of Peter, who travelled about preaching from place to place. Of these labors we have but a very imperfect and distorted account in the book of Acts,¹ but they are established by the unequivocal testimony of Paul, which is above all suspicion.² The original community, however, which had once been the solitary guardian of the saving truth, which had braved the first dire shocks of the hostility of unbelieving countrymen, and which probably contained the greater part of the personal disciples of Jesus that yet remained, was still greatly looked up to by the rest, and naturally exercised a kind of authority over them.

In the clearness of its views and the independence of its attitude toward Judaism the community had not advanced. Several causes combined towards this result. The mere course of time tended to obliterate the impression of the Master's freedom from the minds of the disciples. The atmosphere in which they lived was saturated with orthodoxy and the worship of forms. Rigid and scrupulous Jews had joined the community of the Messiah, and had made their influence felt. Moreover, there were two special circumstances which had exercised a decisive influence upon the brethren. With the first of these we are already familiar. It was the persecution and expulsion of the Greek-speaking believers, and the consequent banishment of the freer and more enlightened element from the community. The second circumstance was an orthodox movement in the bosom of Judaism itself, caused partly by the frantic demands of the emperor Caligula, — who claimed divine honors and attempted to set up his image in the temple (39, 40 A.D.), — and partly

¹ Acts ix. 32 ff. ; see pp. 557, 558.

² Galatia ii. 7, 8.

by the Pharisaic government of king Herod Agrippa I. (41–44 A.D.) These two causes raised the zeal of the Jews for their law, their temple, and their nationality to the highest pitch; and this could not fail to react upon the keen religious life and strained expectancy of the Christian community at Jerusalem.

At its head stood James the brother of Jesus, supported by Peter and John. As to this James, we know that his strict observance of the Law gained him the title of “the Just,” and that he enjoyed the esteem of the Pharisees themselves. Indeed the earliest ecclesiastical historian (170 A.D.), himself a Jewish Christian, says of him that from his birth he had been holy, had let his hair grow, had abstained from wine and intoxicating drinks, from animal food, and from anointing and bathing himself; that he wore nothing but linen, and was constantly kneeling in the temple, praying for the people, till his knees grew as hard as a camel’s. No doubt this description is much exaggerated; but we have no reason to doubt that James observed with the utmost strictness the abstinence enjoined by the Nazarite’s vow, and some of the customs of the Essenes also.¹ The position held by such a man among the followers of Jesus is highly significant; and a learned ecclesiastical father, at the close of the second century, further informs us that the Apostle Matthew never ate any meat, but lived on the produce of the field,—upon fruit and vegetables.² The principles of the Essenes, which had points of unquestionable affinity with the gospel, had gradually forced their way, together with Pharisaism, into the bosom of the community. Thus the principles of Jesus himself were very largely superseded.

And now we can understand the significance of the work of Paul, and how much we owe to him. What would have become, without him, of the cause of Jesus? Though the Twelve were the first boldly to represent and advocate this cause, they afterwards allowed their task, their privileges, and their rank to pass away from themselves to “the Seventy,”—the messengers who bore the news to the heathen. For to them alone it was due that the community did not sooner or later perish, like the other Jewish sects.

We may be sure that for a long time no one at Jerusalem exactly knew what Paul, with Barnabas and others, was really doing. They only heard that the former persecutor had now become a preacher of the faith, and they thanked God for it.

¹ See pp. 6, 100, 101, 242.

² Compare Romans xiv. 2.

Perhaps they knew that he preached the Christ principally to heathen ; but in any case they had no kind of connection with his work. So long as they did not come into contact with these new converts, they might suppose, as a matter of course, that they had embraced Judaism and become proselytes, in order to be admitted to a share in the national expectation of Abraham's seed in the Christ and his salvation. It was only while they retained some such impression that they could be thankful for what Paul was doing. As soon as they should come to hear what was really being done, or as soon as they should come into contact with the converts, as they must at last, then a violent collision would be inevitable. It would have been strange indeed if such a revolution, inaugurating a new religion of the world, had been accomplished without violent shocks, or without sowing dissension between brothers and rending them apart.

As to the occasion, the time, the place, and the manner of this explosion our information is very imperfect. Paul only tells us that certain false brothers had crept into his communities to ensnare the liberty which he and all his converts enjoyed in virtue of their faith in Christ, and to bring them under the yoke of the Law. But this is hardly a fair way of stating the facts. These Jewish believers were no false brothers, but were as zealous for what they held to be the truth of God, and as firm in their own convictions, as Paul himself. However contracted their ideas might be, they acted to the best of their own knowledge. Nor can we believe that they crept in unawares. We may be sure that they took a high tone from the very first, in attempting to vindicate the Law of the Lord where they found it had been neglected, to compel the heathen converts to become proselytes, and the believing Jews to live in strict accordance with the Law, if they hoped to have a place in the kingdom of the Christ. But Paul did not always shine in appreciating the motives and convictions of those who differed from him ; and when he wrote his account of this affair, four years or so afterwards, he had seen these orthodox zealots do such incalculable harm, and had suffered so keenly from them himself, that we can perfectly understand the bitter tone he adopted towards them. Their very first appearance among his converts was evidently fraught with extremest danger, and threatened to break down all that he had built up, and to blight his past and future work with the curse of barrenness. " How is it possible ? "

we ask. Well, orthodoxy seems in every age to have a marvellous fascination for undeveloped natures ; and in this case its exponents could appeal to the community at Jerusalem and the Twelve who had been the disciples of Jesus himself, and who must surely know the conditions of discipleship much better than Paul could do. It was indeed a troubled period in the life of the Apostle of the gentiles !

In Acts we read that the dispute broke out at Antioch, — to which Syria and Cilicia are subsequently¹ added, — and that it was caused by the arrival of certain men from Judaea, who taught the heathen converts that they must incorporate themselves with the covenanted people of the Lord by circumcision and by observing the Law in all other respects. Otherwise, they said, their hope in the Christ would be vain ; and when he returned and judged the world he would not recognize them as his, but would condemn them together with all the uncircumcised. This caused extreme dismay. Paul and Barnabas defended themselves with zeal and power, but with only partial success. Many of the Christians of Antioch were convinced by the new teaching, or at any rate shaken in their former confidence. The contest grew more violent. At last the community determined to send Paul and Barnabas, with certain others, as a deputation to Jerusalem, to ask for the decision of the Apostles and the elders there. All this is very credible, except the last statement, which is not correct. Paul was not sent to Jerusalem by any one, but went of his own accord, though only after long hesitation and a hard struggle. At first he could not bring himself to renounce his proud independence and go to Jerusalem to beg approval for his gospel, as though he recognized the authority of man. But then there was so much at stake ! He was tossed to and fro in painful indecision, till at last he thought he heard a voice from God reassuring him and commanding him to go.

Of course Barnabas went with him, and he took Titus also. When he reached Jerusalem he set forth to the brethren, who now became acquainted with him for the first time, how he labored among the heathen ; how he brought them to the knowledge of the one true God, making them utterly relinquish their idolatry ; how he preached the Christ to them as monarch in the kingdom of God and as the future judge of mankind, making them believe in him and take up his principles into their hearts and lives. Moreover, he told them how

¹ Acts xv. 23.

success had crowned his efforts, and how he had established churches in various parts of Syria and Cilicia. He spoke of the same things privately to the three most influential men, —James, Cephas (Peter), and John; and to them he doubtless explained, more particularly and fully than he had done before the public meeting, the veritable essence of his preaching to the heathen, — justification by faith alone, without circumcision or observance of the Law.

It was hard to bring himself to it! Years afterward there was something repulsive to his nature in the thought of it. But if the heads of the community should once join these Jewish fanatics against him, then he foresaw that all his efforts would be thwarted; that his churches would be torn asunder and finally subjected to the Law, — in a word, that the truth of the gospel would be obscured. And inasmuch as Judaism, with its countless ceremonies, could never be a universal religion, the conversion of the heathen would itself be cramped and ultimately made impossible. So for all these reasons he consented to plead his cause at Jerusalem; though he himself was far too certain in his own mind of the truth that he possessed to submit it for decision to any human judges, even the three “pillars” themselves! Neither did he yield or swerve a hair’s breadth before the zealots, even in the smallest thing, here in Jerusalem any more than he had done when on his own ground. Here, on their own ground and in all their strength, they definitely demanded in the name of the Lord that Titus should be circumcised, and pressed the demand with ever-growing impetuosity. No doubt the Apostles themselves would have been glad if Paul and his disciple would have consented to this step; for if they had not cared about it, then the persistency of the others would not have signified. But for all that they were not prepared definitely to insist upon it, and did not do so. So, in spite of the most violent scenes, Titus remained uncircumcised as a standing assertion that the ordinary heathen converts could still less be expected to conform to this Jewish practice.

So, after various conferences, explanations, and negotiations, Paul finally gained his point. At any rate James and Peter and John were unable to convince him of error, or to show him that God had opened to them any better conception of the gospel than his. So they left him in perfect liberty; for their position also was a very difficult one. The prophets themselves had expected Israel to be the light of the world in the Golden Age, and the heathen to bow in willing subjection

before the Messiah. Nor had the Twelve so completely forgotten the teaching or lost the spirit of Jesus as to retain or encourage the spirit of national pride and exclusiveness. Finally, love of the Master and zeal for his cause compelled them to rejoice in the bold attempt of the preacher who braved every difficulty and danger in order to bear the message of salvation to far-off lands. But the conditions upon which he admitted heathen to the faith were open to grave suspicion. The fact that he enjoined no legal observances whatever, but allowed his converts to continue their heathen ways of life, seriously damped the joy with which the Apostles heard of his success. The Scriptural passages¹ and other arguments which he urged in favor of his gospel did not convince them. But there was one conclusive proof to which Paul constantly recurred, and against which they had nothing to urge. It was the divine blessing which had rested on his work. If it had not been acceptable to the Lord, He would not have allowed him so rich a harvest. That was certain. The success of his work was the seal of divine approbation. Paul had been called to the task of advancing into the heathen world as the herald of the Son of God,—had been endowed with the rare and special gifts and powers needed for the task as indisputably as Peter had been called to preach the Messiah to the Jews. Not to recognize him would be to resist God. So James and Peter and John grasped the hand of fellowship held out to them, and recognized Paul and Barnabas as fellow-laborers in the great task and specifically as preachers of the gospel to the heathen, while they themselves continued to devote their time and strength to the people of the covenant. Ere long the Master himself would return from heaven and decide the question in their favor.

Did this mean a tacit understanding that each would go out of the other's way and take care to keep out of it? At any rate the Twelve implied that they would not harass Paul because his gospel differed from theirs, but would leave the ultimate decision to the Christ. For it is evident that they never came to any real agreement on the points of difference between them, or why should they have marked off their separate fields of labor so distinctly? Had the others accepted Pauline views as to the annulling of the Law and the equality of all mankind, why should not Peter and the rest have preached to heathen, or Paul to Jews, just as it happened? But the fact was that these men of Jerusalem were profoundly

¹ Compare Romans x. 11 ff., xv. 8 ff.

convinced, that, as far as Jews were concerned, Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone was inapplicable, or rather distinctly untrue ; and they determined therefore to go on preaching the glad tidings to the Jews, without loosening the connection of the gospel with the piety and the privileges of their nation. And as for these Greeks, since they were not incorporated into Israel, they could hardly claim equality of rank in the kingdom of God ; but their faith would perhaps secure their admission.

So Paul and Barnabas might go their way. One only condition was made, and to that the messengers to the heathen cheerfully acceded. They were to collect money among their converts for the needy brethren at Jerusalem, whom famine and other disasters had brought into great distress. These contributions would bear a certain analogy to those made by the foreign Jews towards the expenses of the temple, which they paid with great regularity ; and though the claim seemed to imply a certain sense of superiority on the part of the primitive community, it did not involve the smallest sacrifice of principle upon the other side, and accordingly Paul was by no means slack in his compliance with it.

It was not without satisfaction that Paul returned with his two companions to Antioch. He could now assure all those who felt uneasy, either there or elsewhere, that the heads of the community had no desire to force circumcision and the observance of the Law upon the heathen converts as indispensable conditions of salvation, but had given him and Barnabas the hand of fellowship. Of course there would be some who had already been persuaded, and who now persevered in their new course for safety's sake. The Apostles had never said it was superfluous, they felt sure. And, indeed, it appeared only too soon that the gulf, though covered over, was not closed.

After a time Peter came to Antioch. The cause of his visit is not known. Did Paul invite him ? Did he intend to preach Jesus as the Messiah among the numerous Jewish residents ? This would be no violation of the understanding with Paul ; and a mere complimentary visit seems improbable, a journey for relaxation more improbable yet. Besides, his visit does not seem to have been a short one. Be this as it may, all went smoothly enough at first, and Paul gained a veritable triumph. Not only did Peter indulge in friendly intercourse with him and Barnabas, but he even associated

with the heathen converts, and went so far as to eat with them. That was an important step. To enter into such brotherly relations with the uncircumcised and therefore the unclean, as to sit at the same table with them and accept them as fellow believers, was tantamount to recognizing them openly as the equals of the Jewish converts in spite of their continuing to live without the Law. Moreover, Peter himself must on these occasions have transgressed the dietary laws. We may take for granted that the Christians of Antioch had tact enough to respect the ingrained aversion of every Jew — of Paul no less than Peter — to the flesh of swine, and would set no pork upon the board; but they were entirely ignorant of all the Jewish restrictions as to the kinds of food allowed and the proper methods of preparing them. It is quite possible that beef might be served cut from a beast that had been sacrificed to a heathen deity, and it is certain that tithes would not have been paid out of all the victuals. So Peter practically dispensed with the observance of the Law, and lived in gentile fashion.

This is far from inexplicable. Peter was naturally of a liberal disposition, and his short intercourse with Jesus had made him more so. Here at Antioch, on gentile-Christian ground, where Jews and gentiles had been on terms of friendly intercourse before he came, he had hardly any choice; and, finally, the influence of so powerful a personality as Paul's could not fail to have great weight with him.

But, for all this, Peter's conduct was dictated by no principle and rested on no settled conviction. He was not really himself, and this style of life did not sit easily on him. He was accustomed to very different things at Jerusalem, in the midst of his formal surroundings and in the company of the punctilious James. Hence the possibility of his veering completely round.

Perhaps he had been in the Syrian capital for some few weeks when certain Nazarenes from Jerusalem came there also. They had been sent by James, but with what purpose we do not know. It can hardly have been that James had heard of Peter's conduct, and desired to bring him back to the right track. It is more likely that he sent these men to help Peter in his preaching to the Jews. At any rate, on this latter supposition it would still be quite natural that they should not only express themselves to Peter as personally surprised and shocked at his mode of life, so different from that he was accustomed to in Jerusalem, but should also point

out that their chances of converting the Jews of Antioch to faith in the Messiah would be greatly increased if both they themselves and all the Jewish believers in the place strictly conformed to the Law. All this, however, is purely conjectural. We only know that these emissaries of James's had hardly come to Antioch before Peter repented of the line he had taken, shrank from following it out any further, and precipitately withdrew. No one could help observing that he had suddenly begun to avoid with scrupulous care all familiar intercourse with the uncircumcised, and also that fear of these brothers from Jerusalem had dictated the change. But the worst of it was that the other Jewish converts soon began to follow his disastrous example; and even Barnabas, the bold ally who had hitherto sympathized so thoroughly with Paul, was swept along by the stream!

The confusion and dismay among the gentile-Christians were past description. None of the circumcised believers would sit at one table with them as brothers in the Lord any more. A great proportion of the brethren condemned the conduct of Peter, and with good reason, but dare not say what they thought. Meanwhile it became more and more difficult for the heathen converts to maintain their independence of the Law. The men who had just come from Jerusalem insisted with all their might upon observance of the Law as indispensable to a full participation in the joys of salvation. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, urged them in the same direction, indirectly by his conduct if not directly by his words. If they asserted their freedom, they would not only be cut off from intercourse with their brothers of Israel, including Barnabas, but would be risking more or less completely their own future and their foothold in the kingdom of God.

It was a critical and perilous moment! Now for the first time the great difference of principle came sharply and clearly into the light. Was it to be the old or the new, Law or Gospel, forms or faith, authority or freedom, James or Paul? James had almost all the advantages; for custom and prejudice, in a word the almost irresistible weight of tradition, the so-called divine authority, were upon his side. Paul had nothing to oppose to it except the new-born Christian consciousness. No wonder then that Peter, and all the rest who had hitherto displayed so much liberality without exactly seeing what it meant, or in obedience to mere personal preferences, drew back as soon as they were called on to make

a definite choice. It was no longer a case of making concessions and giving way to brothers in the faith who were imperfectly acquainted or wholly unacquainted with the Law. It had become a matter of principle, and they must embrace or reject that principle with all that it involved. Was the Law necessary to salvation or not? If superfluous for the heathen, was it not at any rate binding on the Jews? And if binding on the Jews, must it not after all be binding upon the heathen also? A definite decision must at last be made. Once more, we can well understand that Peter shrank from carrying out his liberal impulses; but we can also understand why Paul, who could not comprehend and could not endure half-heartedness, who regarded this vacillation as conscious unfaithfulness to the principle of the gospel, did not shrink from using the hard word "hypocrisy!"

It was well that Paul was there and did not shrink from carrying his principles through! Seeing what was at stake and knowing how severely Peter's altered conduct was condemned, he roundly told him the truth to his face, and in the presence of all the congregation. "You, a born Jew," he cried in substance, "but yesterday felt no difficulty in living as a gentile; and to-day you would compel all the gentiles to live as Jews! Why did we, who are Jews, believe in the Christ, if not because we knew that observance of the Law could not justify us before God? And if after that we turn round and declare it essential to live after the Law, we make the position of the Christ himself equivocal, bring ourselves under the judgment, empty of its meaning the Christian life of faith, and make out that the Son of God died for nothing!"

What was the end of this controversy we do not know. Paul never hints that Peter confessed his weakness and embraced the cause of freedom; and it is more than improbable that he did so. So far as we can make out, the Apostle of the Jews took good care henceforth never to quit the path of the Law; but on this occasion his own inconsistency must have made it hard for him to put forward any defence, and Paul, as the man of principle, held the field.

But the conflict had resulted in a definite breach.

Such is the conception of these events which we gather from Paul's own words. In the book of Acts, on the contrary, we find the following picture:—

The congregation of Antioch had escorted their deputies, Paul and Barnabas, through the first stages of their journey;

and as the latter passed through Phœnicia and Samaria they rejoiced the hearts of the brethren everywhere by recording the conversion of the heathen. At Jerusalem they were well received by the brethren, with their elders and the Apostles ; and to them also they related all that God had accomplished by their means. But certain Pharisees who had joined the brethren said that the heathen converts ought to submit to circumcision and the Law.

To consider this question, a meeting of the Apostles and elders was held. Great diversity of opinion was manifested among them, until Peter stood up and reminded them how God had long ago specially selected him to preach the gospel to the uncircumcised, and had set the heathen believers on a full equality with the converted Jews. It was therefore a defiance of God to insist upon imposing the yoke of the Law, which the Jews themselves had found unbearable, upon the necks of the gentiles. Surely there was no salvation for either Jew or gentile but by the grace of the Lord Jesus ! Paul and Barnabas took advantage of the silence that followed this address to relate to the whole assembled multitude what wonders God had done by them among the heathen. Then James began. He referred to the ancient oracle about the conversion of the heathen, and expressed his opinion that they ought not to throw any obstacles in the way of that conversion. It would be enough to require the converts to abstain from the meat of beasts that had been sacrificed to idols, from all that the Jews regarded as inchastity, including marriage within certain degrees of relationship, and from all animals that had been caught and strangled in snares, or for any other cause had not bled properly when killed. So much might reasonably be required, for the law of Moses had long been preached in the heathen world as well as in Jewry, week by week, and might therefore fairly claim a certain degree of respect even from the heathen.

This proposal was approved by the Apostles, the elders, and the whole community ; and they determined to send two representatives, Judas, the son of Sabbas, and Silas, to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with an official address to the gentile converts there and in Syria and Cilicia generally, in which the fanatics who wished to make circumcision and the observance of the Law compulsory were repudiated as mischief-makers, Barnabas and Paul commended as zealous servants of the Christ, and abstinence from the four specified abominations only enjoined in the name of the Holy Spirit as

absolutely necessary. Accordingly the four set out, and when they reached Antioch they summoned the brethren and gave them the letter, the contents of which they received with joy.

Judas and Silas, who were both of them prophets, labored for a time at Antioch and then returned to those who had sent them. Paul and Barnabas stayed at Antioch, teaching and preaching there with many others, till Paul proposed that they should go and visit the churches they had founded on their first missionary journey. Barnabas agreed, and suggested that they should take John Mark with them, to which Paul objected on the ground that he had deserted them before. They grew warm on the subject and finally separated, Barnabas going with Mark to Cyprus, and Paul with Silas to the churches of Syria and Cilicia, everywhere enforcing the regulations laid down by the council of Jerusalem.

We perceive at once that this narrative differs totally from that of Paul, and that in many points it flatly contradicts it, and is therefore quite untrustworthy. Here the question is decided in a formal assembly, while Paul says that it was settled in private conference with the three “pillars.” Here Paul drops quite into the background, whereas he was really the principal speaker or pleader. Here there is no difference of opinion between him and the Apostles; he has no cause for anxiety in going to Jerusalem, and not a word is said of dividing the field of labor. The one stipulation really made,—namely, that the Gentile believers should contribute to the support of their Jewish brothers,—is passed over without a syllable. This is intentional, for advantage was subsequently taken of this money question to represent Paul in a most odious light; and this is why our author spoke of his collection of relief funds at an earlier period, when no difficulties whatever had arisen.¹ Nothing is said of Titus, for fear of recalling the violent dispute of which he was the centre, and the steadfast refusal of Paul to circumcise him; and our author, who shrinks from nothing that looks conciliatory, afterwards pretends² that Paul, when taking Timothy upon a journey with him, circumcised him to please the Jews of Asia Minor, who were all aware that his father was a heathen. We may rest assured, however, that Paul would never be guilty of such a sacrifice of principle, especially after all that had occurred.

The discourses put into the mouths of James and Peter are

¹ See p. 535 and chap. x. p. 611.

² Acts xvi. 3.

especially remarkable. Even James is for toleration and concession ; but Peter — so completely is every thing reversed — speaks like a genuine follower of Paul. “ There is no distinction now,” he says, “ between Jew and gentile. God has given the Holy Spirit to the latter as well as the former ; to subject the heathen to the Law is defiance of God ; all alike must be purified by faith alone ; not even the Jewish believers can find salvation in the Law ! ” Our author never ventures to let Paul himself come out so boldly with his own principles ! ¹ If Peter had ever really used such words, how easily Paul might have brought him to task at Antioch ! James leaves this portion of his colleague’s speech untouched, and goes on the assumption that the Law remains in force for the Jews, but that the number of commandments enforced among the gentiles should be as small as possible.

As regards the four commandments themselves, or rather the resolution of the council at Jerusalem to enforce them, Paul’s solemn statement that he was left at perfect liberty is conclusive. Had the resolution really been made and accepted, the scene at Antioch could never have been enacted ; the heathen converts would have complied with the regulations ; ² Peter could have had no difficulty in eating with them ; the emissaries of James could not have demanded their exclusion ; Barnabas and the other Jewish members would never have separated themselves from them. Finally we observe that afterwards, when the question of the use of heathen viands, especially meat that had been sacrificed to idols, arose in the Pauline communities, no one, whether Jew or heathen, knew any thing of a resolution on the subject passed by the parent church. The prohibitions themselves are what the Jewish-Christians afterwards came to regard as the minimum of legal observance upon which they must insist from the Gentile-Christians. But this minimum was never officially defined. It merely grew up in practice, and was suggested by the Noachic commandments, ³ which the Jews required the proselytes of the gate to observe ; or rather by the precepts of the Law to the strangers who dwelt in Israel. ⁴ In post-apostolic times we really find these observances recognized as the test of the renunciation of heathenism.

Again, Peter’s visit to Antioch, with all that took place on that occasion, is consigned to oblivion by the book of Acts, for obvious reasons. The estrangement between Paul and

¹ Compare Acts xxi. 21, 24.

² See vol. i. p. 83.

³ Acts xv. 30, 31, xvi. 4, xxi. 25.

⁴ Leviticus xvii. 8 ff.

Barnabas, which was really caused by the equivocal and vacillating conduct of the latter, is accounted for in Acts by a totally different cause, that has no connection with the question of faith; but we may remark that, since Paul still writes of Barnabas some years afterwards as though he were a preacher to the heathen and a fellow-laborer of his own in full sympathy with him,¹ we are justified in doubting whether it is true that the two men separated for good, as the book of Acts declares.

But perhaps the most important of all the divergences between the historical account of Paul and the harmonizing efforts of the author of Acts has still to be mentioned. Paul tells us not only that God had unmistakably appointed Peter the Apostle of the Jews, as He had appointed him the preacher to the heathen, but also that the fact was recognized and declared at Jerusalem; but in Acts we find Peter, in a passage of his speech to which James subsequently refers, speaking of it as a matter of general knowledge that God had long ago chosen him (Peter), out of all the rest, as the one from whose mouth the heathen should hear the gospel and believe! It is easy to see that this ascription of the original apostolate of the heathen to Peter, this tearing of his laurels from Paul, is simply intended to fill up the gulf between the two hostile parties of the post-apostolic age. The story, composed with this object and referred to in the discourses we have been considering, runs as follows:²—

Peter was making a tour of all the churches in Palestine, which had entered upon a period of great prosperity since the conversion of their most violent persecutor, Saul. In the course of this journey he came to Lydda, and there, in the name of Jesus the Messiah, he cured a certain Æneas, who had been lame and confined to his bed for eight years. An urgent invitation from the brethren at Joppa, which was situated on the sea-shore about four leagues from Lydda, hastened his departure; for there at Joppa one of the believers,—an unwearied benefactress of the poor, named Tabitha, in Greek Dorcas (that is “gazelle”),—had just died, and they were keeping her unburied in expectation of Peter’s arrival. When he came he restored her to life, to the great joy of the community, and especially of the poor widows whom she had provided with clothing. By these two miracles he won many souls for the good cause in both the cities and the districts

¹ Galatians ii. 1, 9; 1 Corinthians ix. 6.

² Acts ix. 31-xi. 18.

round. He remained at Joppa some time, in the house of a tanner, — which was a proof of his liberality, since the tanner's trade was considered half unclean, and those who practised it usually had to live apart. It was here that he received his call as Apostle of the Gentiles.

There dwelt at Cæsarea, a day and a half's journey north of Joppa, a certain Cornelius, an officer of the Italian cohort; and he and all his household were devout worshippers of the god of Israel, though not proselytes. One afternoon, at the third hour of prayer, his enlightened eyes beheld an angel enter the apartment; and the angel said that, as a reward for his perseverance in prayer and his frequent alms to the Jews, God commanded him to send to Joppa for a man called Simon Peter, who was lodging in such and such a house. Cornelius instantly obeyed, and sent three trusty messengers to find Peter.

But would Peter consent to visit a gentile? That was the Lord's care. The following day at twelve o'clock the Apostle had gone out on the roof of the house for the second prayer. He was hungry, but the meal was not yet ready. Then he fell into a trance and saw the heaven open, while something like a great sheet suspended by the four corners was let down to earth. It contained all manner of four-footed and creeping things and all manner of birds, clean and unclean alike. A voice from heaven cried, "Rise, Peter! kill and eat!" But he urged that he had never eaten unclean food in his life; upon which the voice replied, "What God has cleansed call not thou unclean." This was repeated three times, after which the sheet was drawn up again into heaven. Now while Peter was pondering upon the meaning of this vision, the messengers came from Cornelius. They had found the house, and were at that very moment inquiring for Peter. Then the Holy Spirit commanded the Apostle to go with them unhesitatingly, as sent by the Spirit. So he came down, made himself known, inquired what had brought them to him, heard of the message Cornelius had received from God, offered them hospitality for that night, and the next morning started with them for Cæsarea, accompanied by six of the brethren from Joppa, on account of the great importance of the occasion.

Cornelius was awaiting him, together with his relatives and his closest friends; and no sooner had the Apostle entered than he fell down before him in superstitious reverence. But the other repudiated his homage, said that he too was a man

and nothing more, and entered the room, which was full of people in familiar conversation. His first care was to explain how it was that he, a Jew, had not refused to enter into these relations with a gentile. God had taught him to consider no man unclean or an outcast. But now he wished to know why he had been sent for. Then the officer told him of the vision he had had as he was fasting three days before, and concluded : " So now we are all here, as in the presence of God, to know what it is that the Lord has commanded you."

Then Peter began. Now he knew for certain that God paid no heed to birth or to descent, but would extend his grace to any God-fearing and virtuous man, whether he were Jew or gentile, and would admit him into His kingdom. They must all have heard of the glad tidings sent to Israel,—the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ, the Lord of all both Jew and gentile. After the preaching of John, the whole of Judæa, beginning with Galilee, had been filled with the name of Jesus of Nazareth,—a man entrusted by God with the Holy Spirit and with power to work miracles, who had gone through the land doing good and healing all the victims of the devil by the power of God. Now when they had murdered this man, God raised him again and showed him, not to the whole of Israel, but to his chosen witnesses. He had commissioned the Apostles to preach him to Israel as the future judge of the living and the dead ; and the prophets long ago had spoken of his salvation.

When Peter had reached this point, all his hearers were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit, and " spoke with tongues," or burst into rapturous praises of God. The Jewish believers from Joppa were filled with amazement when they saw this gift of the Spirit, first poured out on the day of Pentecost, communicated to heathen likewise. Peter felt that, when the Spirit had been thus poured out upon them, there could not possibly be any difficulty in formally admitting them into the Messiah's community ; and accordingly they were baptized as believers in the Lord, after which Peter yielded to their desire that he would stay with them a little time.

It was not long before the other Apostles and the Jewish believers generally came to hear that the heathen had accepted the preaching of the Christ ; and when Peter returned to Jerusalem the members of the community severely blamed him for having sat at table with the uncircumcised. But when Peter gave them a detailed account of his vision of the clean and unclean beasts and all that had followed it, and told

them how the Spirit had been poured upon Cornelius and his friends (to which the six brethren from Joppa could testify), then all agreed with him that it was impossible to mistake the hand of God in this, and that it would be impious to resist it. So they made no further difficulties, but praised God for having called the heathen also to repent and attain to the supreme blessedness.

This story, which is given with extreme detail because of its great importance, is meant to show that God himself had unconditionally sanctioned the conversion of the heathen. And therefore our author places it before the beginning of Paul's work among the gentiles, and even before the preaching of the Grecian Jews at Antioch. Every thing is dictated from above, and nothing is the result of any human impulse. Nay, Peter is expressly represented as entertaining a very exaggerated horror of the gentiles, which he overcomes with difficulty; while the indignation of the men of Jerusalem shows that nothing short of an unmistakable divine revelation would have reconciled them to the measure. It is the angel's visit, the voice from heaven, and the pouring out of the Spirit that decide the whole matter. Thus it appears that Jew and gentile are alike in the sight of God; that the latter has the same claims to the gospel as the former; that circumcision and observance of the Law are no conditions of salvation. The repeated use of the expression "*the heathen*"¹ shows that there is no intention of treating this as an isolated case, and that it is regarded as involving the whole principle of the conversion of the heathen. In the end the primitive community not only acquiesces in the accession of the uncircumcised, but glorifies God for it.

Whether there are any facts at all at the bottom of this story it is difficult to say. In any case its enumeration of the cities Lydda, Joppa, and Cæsarea constitutes our sole remaining account of Peter's wide-spread and successful labors as the missionary Apostle of the Jews. As it now stands, it need hardly be said that the narrative is in direct contradiction with history. To convince ourselves of this we have only to think of the orthodox believers who forced themselves into Paul's communities, of the danger which consequently threatened his work among the heathen, of his painful journey to Jerusalem, of the emphatic indication of Peter as the Apostle of the Jews in contradistinction to the two messengers to the heathen, of Peter's conduct at Antioch, of the attitude

¹ Acts x. 45, xi. 1, 18; compare x. 28, 35, xi. 3, 17.

adopted by James, and of all that yet remains to be told of the community at Jerusalem. In a word, this story makes out that the question of the conversion of the heathen was supernaturally settled, once for all, to everybody's satisfaction; whereas we know from Paul what bitter proof of the contrary he had, and in the book of Acts itself, a few chapters further on, we find the question still regarded as unsettled.¹ Quite apart from the miracles and visions, then, the story is a palpable fiction. As to the miraculous machinery, we may note the analogies between the restoration of Dorcas to life and that of Jairus's daughter, between the person of the Cæsarean officer and that of his brother in arms at Capernaum, and above all between the experiences of Peter and the honor which he gains and all that we are elsewhere told of Paul.² And again the visions of Peter and Cornelius remind us of those of Ananias and Saul. Finally, it was no accident, but a definite attempt to obscure the events at Antioch, which dictated the emphatic assertion that Peter had eaten with the uncircumcised, had been reproached for doing so by the orthodox believers, had defended himself manfully, and had freed himself from all blame even in their eyes.

The whole story is a pure invention, and any thing but a purposeless one. Long after the breach had been made in the old community, our author, or his authority, attempted to heal it for ever by throwing a veil over the events that had given rise to it, or rather by disguising them past the possibility of recognition. He would have accomplished his purpose to perfection, had not a few of Paul's letters been preserved! After the short-lived peace of Jerusalem the decisive outbreak at Antioch established the breach between the two parties. The difference of principle between them must end in open warfare. Personal jealousies embittered the contest. Paul's public rebuke of Peter could never be forgiven. A century afterwards the extreme orthodox section reproached him with having told their Apostle that he was condemned for his equivocal dealings.

This conflict was to follow Paul, like a curse, wherever he went, and fall like a blight upon all his work. He seems to have thought it best to leave Antioch at once. In spite of his uncompromising attitude, or perhaps in consequence of it, he was deserted, or at least suspected, by many of the brethren.

¹ Acts xv. 1, 5, 6, *et seq.*

² Compare Mark v. 23, 35, 40-42 with Acts ix. 37-41; Luke vii. 2-5 with Acts x. 1, 2, 4 22; and see p. 539 and chap. x. p. 000.

ren. He permanently removed to other regions the scene of his labors as a preacher. Let us follow him upon these missionary journeys and stay with him, as he takes up his abode for longer or shorter periods in various centres of the ancient civilization !

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOSPEL IN EUROPE.

ACTS XVI.-XVIII. 18; MARK V. 1-20.¹

IN the book of Acts Paul's missionary labors are artificially divided into three periods. Each journey is begun from Antioch and concluded or followed by a visit to Jerusalem ; and in each case that portion of the narrative on which the chief stress falls is illustrated by a discourse. At the beginning of the first journey there is an address to the Jews, in the middle of the second a discourse to the heathen, and at the end of the third a farewell speech to the Christians. But we cannot preserve this division, for the visit to the primitive community in the City of the Temple which divides the so-called second and third missionary journeys was never made at all, and the two therefore fall into one.² After the events at Antioch (51 or 52 A.D.) begins a period of not less than six and not more than eight years, during which we find Paul working in a fresh field in the central and western portions of Asia Minor, in Macedonia, and in Greece, travelling about from place to place but settling for some time, first at Corinth and afterwards at Ephesus, where he found convenient centres from which to start and to which to return.

Among the written sources of information used by the author of Acts was a record made by an unknown friend of the Apostle, who accompanied him upon some at least of his journeys. It has been conjectured that this friend was Titus, whose name is never mentioned in the book of Acts ; and, though we cannot be certain in the matter, there seem to be no valid objections to this idea. A more common opinion is that it was a certain Greek physician of the name of Luke,³ and that the tradition which ascribes the whole book to him

¹ Matthew viii. 28-34; Luke viii. 26-39.

² Colossians iv. 14.

² Acts xviii. 21, 22.

rests upon the fact that it contains these fragments from his hand.¹ But whoever he was we only possess a few fragments of his itinerary,² embracing the passage to Philippi and the opening of the Apostle's labors at that place, the last journey from Europe to Asia Minor, the journey to Jerusalem, and finally that to Rome. We recognize these fragments at once from the author's use of the first person plural, which the writer of Acts preserved, perhaps with a feeling that this "we" would give a greater air of fidelity to the whole book. In other respects he probably was not equally scrupulous in giving the fragments just as he found them.

It is not an accident that we first meet with this eye-witness on occasion of the introduction and initial establishment of the gospel in Europe; for the preaching of the gospel in our own quarter of the globe has almost as special an interest for our author as it has for ourselves. In fact he lays down his pen as soon as he has recorded the establishment of Christianity in Rome,—the heart of the Græco-Roman world, the great capital of the West. And so too here he passes with extreme rapidity over all that precedes the passage to Europe; namely, the journey through Syria and Cilicia, by Derbe and Lystra (where Paul found Timothy and took him with him), and through Phrygia and Galatia.³ He further informs us that the Apostle was prevented by divine interposition from preaching in the northwest of Asia Minor, and that at Troas God summoned him to preach the gospel in Europe by sending him a vision of a Macedonian who implored him to come over to his land with the message of salvation.

There is only one portion of this very meagre account which we are in a position to amplify. It is the journey through Galatia. In a letter that he afterwards wrote to the congregations scattered through this district, Paul reminds them that an illness had compelled him to remain some time among them,⁴—probably not in any of the great cities, such as Pessinus, Tavium, or Aneyra, but in the country. This was the beginning of his labors in this district, which were crowned with remarkable success. Here he met with men of a very different character from any he had yet known. They were not Asiatics, but were Gallic or Celtic colonists who had been settled in the district for three hundred years. Although he was ill, and his sickness seems to have had an offensive

¹ Compare p. 29.

² Acts xvi. 10-17, xx. 5-15, xxi. 1-18, xxvii. 1-xxviii. 16.

³ See pp. 555, 556.

⁴ Galatians iv. 13.

character, perhaps consisting in whole or in part in an eruption or inflammation of the eyes, yet he met with an eminently favorable reception. Had he been an angel from heaven, or the Christ in person, he could hardly have been welcomed more. The Galatians would have torn out their very eyes to give him.¹ These were fair days in the stormy life of Paul. There were no Jews to listen with amazement and suspicion to his words, or to offer direct resistance. He had only to do with heathen, whom he found as simple and open-minded as they were earnest for salvation. So he preached the death of Jesus on the cross to them as the only means of salvation, and preached so clearly and powerfully that he seemed to set it before their very eyes ; and they joyfully accepted the faith that was to justify them in the sight of God. Signs that their spiritual nature was thoroughly roused soon followed. Spiritual blessings were multiplied upon them ; they glowed with zeal for the truth, and strove to live pure lives in order that when the Christ returned he might receive them into the kingdom of God.² Before Paul left Galatia he had founded a number of communities of heathen converts, small but rich in promise, won heart and soul for his gospel, and deeply attached to him personally.

The journey from the heart of Asia Minor to the northwest coast appears to have furnished little or nothing noteworthy. At Troas Paul took ship, accompanied by Timothy, Silas, and the unknown companion who wrote the diary. Passing the island of Samothrace, they came in two days to Neapolis, on the coast of Thrace, whence they proceeded to Philippi in Macedonia. This city, which Augustus had made a Roman colony, was the scene of the first preaching of the gospel in Europe. On the Sabbath day after their arrival the missionaries went through the city gate to the Jewish house of prayer, which was situated as usual near the river, for the convenience of the worshippers, who were thus enabled to perform the prescribed ablutions before offering their prayers. Here they found certain women to whom they spoke about the object of their visit, and among them was a proselyte known as Lydia, or “the Lydian woman,” because she came from Thyatira, in Lydia. She was a seller of purple dye. Now this woman listened to Paul’s preaching with extreme interest, and before long she was converted and baptized, with all her household, and begged the missionaries to take up their abode with her.

¹ Galatians iv. 14, 15.

² Galatians iii. 1 ff., iv. 18, v. 7, vi. 9, 10.

But few particulars are known of their stay at Philippi, which certainly lasted a good many weeks. Their work prospered, and a community was founded to which Paul was always deeply attached to the day of his death ; and it returned his affection, became his pride and joy, and, while so many others fell away from him, always remained faithful and obedient. More than once in the period we are now considering, and afterwards when he was a prisoner at Rome, Paul consented to receive pecuniary assistance from his friends at Philippi, though he had made it a general rule to provide for his own support.¹ Among the Apostle's fellow-laborers at Philippi, two women (Euodia and Syntyche) and two men (Clement and Epaphroditus) are mentioned by name.² All this deserves our confidence ; but the following account of the way in which the stay at Philippi was brought to a close certainly cannot be accepted as it stands :—

As the missionaries were going to the place of prayer, they were met by a certain slave-girl who was possessed of a spirit of divination which brought her owners great profit. Perhaps she was a ventriloquist. Now she followed the preachers day after day, and pointed them out to every one as servants of the Most High who preached the way of salvation. At last Paul was grieved by what she did, and commanded the spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her, which it immediately did. But by this action he drew down upon himself the enmity of the girl's proprietors, for he had deprived them of a considerable source of profit. Accordingly they seized the first opportunity of laying hold of Paul and Silas and dragging them before the chief magistrates, the Duumvirs, in the market-place. They denounced them as Jews, who had thrown the city into commotion, and who taught a foreign religion which it was illegal for them, as Roman citizens, to adopt.³ The people vociferously demanded that the two strangers should be punished, and the magistrates, tearing their clothes from their backs, ordered a severe scourging to be administered to them ; after which they were thrown into prison, with special orders to the jailer to keep them securely. Accordingly they were locked in the inmost dungeon, with their feet in the stocks. So far from being terrified, Paul and Silas only rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer in the good cause ; and they offered up their prayers and made the prison ring with their songs of praise,

¹ Philippians i. 5, ii. 12, iv. 14–16.

² Compare p. 3.

² Philippians iv. 2, 3, ii. 25.

so that all the other prisoners listened. And thus the hour of midnight came. Then suddenly the foundations of the prison shook with a mighty earthquake, while all the doors flew open of themselves and all the fetters dropped from the prisoners' limbs. The jailer waked ; and when he saw the doors wide open, thinking that the prisoners had escaped, and knowing that he was responsible for their safe custody, he drew his sword in despair and was going to kill himself. But Paul cried out, " Do yourself no violence, for we are all here ! " Then the jailer called for a light, rushed in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas, whom he now recognized as messengers of God. He brought them out of the prison and said, " Masters ! what must I do to be saved ? " They told him he must believe in the Christ, preached the gospel to him and his household, and baptized them that same night. He on his side washed and mollified the wounds they had received from the scourges, took them with him to his own house, and set food before them, rejoicing greatly that he and all his household had learned to believe in God. In the morning the magistrates sent the lictors to dismiss the two preachers ; and the jailer told them that they could go in peace. But Paul would not accept this message. They had been publicly maltreated and condemned to prison, he urged, in defiance of the law which forbade the scourging of Roman citizens ; and were they now to be smuggled out in secrecy ? No ! let the magistrates themselves come and conduct them out of the prison honorably ! When the duumvirs received this message, they were alarmed to find that they had unwittingly infringed upon the privileges of Roman citizens ; so they led them out of the prison with a courteous apology, and begged them to leave the city for fear of fresh commotions. Accordingly they took leave of the brethren in Lydia's house, and then departed.

We cannot accept this narrative as true. The conduct of the magistrates, who have no good reason either for their savage enmity at first or their remarkable courtesy afterwards, the conduct of Paul himself, who does not plead his Roman citizenship till too late, the superfluous miracle of the earthquake which in some way causes all the fetters to fall from the prisoners' limbs, the wonderful self-restraint of the prisoners themselves, not one of whom escapes, Paul's knowledge of the fact, though he is situated in the inmost cell and all is darkness, — these and other such features in the story put it beyond all doubt that it is a fiction framed on the model of the miracu-

lous deliverance of the Twelve, and afterwards of Peter.¹ The only circumstances we can accept as facts are that a slave-girl who was possessed shouted after Paul, which the eye-witness mentions, and that the preachers were severely handled at Philippi, as we are told elsewhere, probably by Paul himself.²

The preachers of Christ now followed the great highway through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and in four days reached Thessalonica, the capital of the second district of Macedonia, an important and populous commercial centre. Undaunted by their sufferings at Philippi, they resumed their task at Thessalonica and met with great success. Their gospel found ready access, and a community of heathen was soon established who received it as a message from God with so much warmth that the new religion rapidly spread; and in consequence of the close intercourse between Thessalonica and the surrounding country, and its extensive commercial relations with other places, the news of the movement spread far and wide.³ Not that there was no resistance. Constantly, and from the very first, the believers had much to endure from their unconverted fellow-townspeople; but in spite of every thing they were filled with joy to think of the salvation that awaited them, for the preachers had warned them from the first that they must expect to be oppressed before the Christ should return, bringing blessings and glory to all who had confessed him.⁴ It is probable, too, that the preachers were greatly harassed and at last expelled by the Jewish residents at Thessalonica, who could not endure that the kingdom of God should be promised to the heathen. This premature departure was a great grief to Paul, for he had thoroughly set his heart on establishing a flourishing community, and he had not been able to stay as long as he wished or thought necessary.⁵

The book of Acts makes Paul conform to the rule which it has imposed upon him before,⁶ and begins by demonstrating to the Jews in the synagogue, on three successive Sabbaths, that the Scripture foretold the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah, and proved that Jesus was he. The author has

¹ See pp. 496 ff., 499 ff., 540, 541.

² 1 Thessalonians ii. 2; compare 2 Corinthians xi. 25.

³ 1 Thessalonians i. 7-9, ii. 13, 14.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians i. 6, 10, ii. 14, iii. 3, 4.

⁵ 1 Thessalonians ii. 15 ff.

⁶ See p. 540.

preserved the name of the man with whom Paul and Silas stayed, which was Jason, and the names of three other brethren who subsequently accompanied Paul upon some of his journeys,—namely, Gaius, Aristarchus, and Secundus. His account of the termination of Paul's visit is as follows: When the gospel had made great way, especially among the proselytes and distinguished women, the Jews became jealous, stirred up a good-for-nothing rabble to make a riotous attack upon Jason's house in hopes of finding the preachers there, and, failing in this, dragged Jason himself and certain other Christians before the magistrates. They accused them of harboring men who were turning the world upside down and demanding allegiance to their king, Jesus, instead of the emperor. But the authorities set Jason and the rest at liberty when they had given sureties for the conduct of their guests.

Under cover of night the preachers now made their way to Berea, where according to the Acts they again addressed themselves expressly to the Jews. They found them more willing to hear them, more interested in what they said, and less wedded to their prejudices than their fellow-believers at Thessalonica had been; and their labors met with success. But the Jews of Thessalonica, hearing that Paul was preaching the gospel at Berea, went after him and succeeded in stirring up the mob against him. The faithful, of whom Sopater alone is mentioned by name, immediately conveyed Paul to the sea-shore and escorted him to Athens, whence they returned with a request from him to Silas and Timothy, who had stayed at Berea, to join him as soon as possible.

This narrative is slightly inaccurate in certain points. In reality, when Paul had been compelled to leave Thessalonica he made more than one fruitless effort to return. At last he could bear it no longer, and from Athens he sent Timothy, though it left him single-handed himself, to strengthen the believers at Thessalonica under the oppression they were suffering.¹

Paul at Athens! The Gospel of the crucified Nazarene had reached the centre of Grecian culture, philosophy, art, and eloquence! The insignificant Jewish preacher stood at the focus of the world's æsthetic, intellectual, and scholarly life!

The very nature of the case forbade the new religion from making any rapid progress in this brilliant society, where it

¹ 1 Thessalonians ii. 17, 18, iii. 1, 2, 11.

could only seem a folly, and could only meet with ridicule. Love of sensuous gratification rejected the demands of self-denial; refined taste was equally offended by the cross itself, and by the person and address of its emissaries,—in a word, the conception of life and the philosophy of the universe which these preachers held were alike and utterly foreign to the tone of Athens. And yet the future of Christianity depended upon its power of ultimately bringing the Grecian spirit under the control of its influence, and availing itself of its manifold capacities and its noble powers. It is one of Paul's chief merits, one of the strongest proofs of the value of his doctrines, that his profound and philosophical conceptions secured this victory at last.

It was a moment of deep import, then, when the Apostle of the gentiles, full of zeal as ever, raised his voice in the very heart of Greece. But at first he excited little or no attention, and his harvest was but small. Indeed, he had no intention of taking up his abode for any length of time at Athens, and after laboring there but a little while he went on to Corinth. Of the small circle won for the Christ at Athens we have the names of Dionysius—a member of the highest judicial body, who figures in ecclesiastical tradition as the first bishop (overseer) of the community at Athens—and of a woman named Damaris.

The author of Acts, to whom we owe the preservation of these names, caught the dramatic interest of the moment when Christianity was first preached at Athens, though he never grasped the meaning of the Pauline gospel in all its depth and compass. Here, then, he gives us a kind of counterpart to his picture of Stephen's preaching and experiences at Jerusalem. He borrows his colors from what he knew of the reception given to the gospel by cultivated Greeks of his own day; and bringing Paul to the hill of Ares (Mars), where the supreme court of judicature, the special guardian of religious laws, used to hold its sittings, he puts a discourse upon his lips which is distinguished by the remarkable felicity of its introduction and the beauty of its thoughts, but is foreign alike in form and substance to the mind of the Apostle. He tells us, then, that Paul was deeply shocked by the idolatry of Athens; and it is true that the city was remarkably rich in temples, altars, and statues of the deities, unequalled in beauty anywhere. He spoke in the synagogue, continues our author, with the Jews and proselytes, and in the market-place daily with any one that he could meet.

Certain philosophers, too, of different schools, — Epicureans and Stoics, — argued with him. But one despised his words as mere babbling, while another taxed him with proclaiming foreign gods, Jesus and resurrection, — the crime for which Socrates in days gone by had been forced to drink the hemlock. At last curiosity, which was the ruling passion of the people of Athens, urged them to conduct him to the Areopagus (Ares' hill) and invite him to expound these novel doctrines to them. His discourse was at once a defence of himself and an exposition of the gospel, and he attached it to an inscription he had seen upon an altar that ran, “To an unknown God.” Yes! this God whom they knew not; the Creator and Ruler of all things; the All-sufficing, who was not far from his offspring, man; who could not be represented by an image, the lifeless product of a human hand, — even Him did he preach to them! Then he urged them to repent, for the last judgment was at hand, — the judgment by a man whom God had raised from the realms of death. A man raised from the dead! That was too much for the gravity of the Athenians. They would listen to him no longer. Some openly ridiculed him, others put on an appearance of courtesy and interest; but the result was meagre in the extreme.

From Athens Paul went on to Corinth. Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, the seat of the governor, renowned from of old for its commerce and manufactures above any other city in Greece; marvellously favored by Nature, since it lay upon an isthmus between two bays, and was flanked by its harbors of Lechæum on the west and Cenchräæ on the east; lavishly but tastefully embellished by art; proverbial for its wealth, its luxury, and its licentiousness. Here Paul established himself for the present, as the place seemed admirably adapted to serve as a centre for his missionary labors. He began by seeking the means of supporting himself by his trade, and this brought him into contact with a certain Jew of the name of Aquila. He was a native of Pontus, but he had just now come, together with his wife, Prisca or Priscilla, from Rome. The cause of their leaving that city was that the Emperor Claudius had ordered all the Jews out of Rome, in consequence, it would appear, of some disturbances; but so many Jews were settled there that we can hardly suppose the edict was ever strictly enforced, and in any case it was very soon allowed to lapse. Now this Aquila was a tent-maker, like Paul himself; so the latter took

up his abode with him and they worked together. Whether Aquila and his wife were already Christians, or whether Paul converted them, we are not told. We only know that they afterwards settled at Ephesus, and are repeatedly mentioned in Paul's letters as believers, in whose house a little band of Christians regularly met, and as fellow-laborers of his own who had even risked their lives for him.¹

As soon as the Apostle arrived at Corinth, he began his work as the messenger of Christ with his accustomed zeal; and when he was joined soon afterwards by Silas and Timothy, who came from Thessalonica, the three seized every opportunity of prosecuting their task. Paul himself confesses that he began his labors amid these totally new surroundings with extreme trepidation, fearing that his want of Greek culture would be fatal to his success; but he adds that he fulfilled his task in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and of the power of God.² In view of the approaching day of judgment at the establishment of the kingdom of God, he preached in all simplicity, as to first beginners, the gospel of the crucified one, whose death was the salvation of all who would believe. According to Acts, both Paul and his companions confined themselves as usual to the synagogue at first. There Paul endeavored every Sabbath to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah; but when they persistently rejected and reviled his message, he felt at liberty to turn to the heathen; and after that he never went into the synagogue again, but preached in the house of a proselyte called Justus, who lived close by. Now all this is simply dictated by the writer's well-known misconception of Paul's apostolate to the heathen;³ but when he tells us that Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, became a believer, the statement finds confirmation elsewhere. For we happen to know that by a rare exception⁴ Paul baptized him with his own hand, as also a certain Gaius, in whose house he subsequently lodged, and who exercised hospitality to the whole community. Before either of these he had likewise baptized the household of Stephanas, who is honorably mentioned as "the first fruits of Achaia."⁵ Together with this Stephanas, we hear of Fortunatus and Achaicus; of a woman called Phoebe, who was deaconess of the community at Cenchreæ, and rendered the greatest services to the good

¹ 1 Corinthians xvi. 19; Romans xvi. 3, 4; compare Acts xviii. 18, 26; 2 Timothy iv. 19.

² 1 Corinthians ii. 3, 4.

³ See p. 540, and 1 Corinthians xii. 2.

⁴ See p. 537.

⁵ 1 Corinthians i. 14, 16, xvi. 15, 17; Romans xvi. 23.

cause ; of Erastus the city treasurer ; of Quartus and others.¹ Thus the circle of believers gradually swelled, and was distinguished by keen interest in the gospel and great spiritual activity. We read in Acts that the Christ appeared by night to Paul and urged him to preach courageously, for he would support him and would frustrate every hostile design, and there were many souls in Corinth ready to receive the gospel. The Apostle himself says nothing of this vision. He only tells us that his converts were for the most part ignorant men, of no position, — slaves and the refuse of society, — and that the previous lives of many of them left very much to be desired.²

Paul worked a year and a half at Corinth ; but we must not suppose that he never left the city all this time. He visited the two harbors, the places in the neighborhood, and many more distant cities of Achaia, — as we may gather from the superscriptions of his two letters to the Corinthians.³ In consequence of these expeditions he was not always in a position to provide for his own support ; but he never either asked or received any help from those among whom he was laboring. Some of the Macedonian believers however, probably Philippians, sent him assistance, which he thankfully accepted.⁴ Only one event is chronicled in Acts during all this period, and that one serves the author's purpose of representing the Romans as more friendly to the gospel than the Jews. Gallio, we are told (a brother of the celebrated Seneca, and a man of very lovable and exalted character), was governor of Achaia ; and the Jews rose against Paul as one man and dragged him before his judgment-seat, saying that he was one who taught men to serve God in a manner that conflicted with the Law. But Gallio did not so much as ask Paul for his defence. He told the accusers that they had brought no criminal charge against Paul, and that he had no intention of mixing himself up with their religious disputes : they must settle them among themselves. Upon this he dismissed them ; and the people seized their leader, Sosthenes, who had succeeded Crispus as ruler of the synagogue, and beat him, while Gallio looked on and did not interfere. Paul, continues our author, still remained some time at Corinth, and then took leave of the community and crossed over with Aquila and Priscilla to Ephesus.

¹ Romans xvi. 1, 2, 23.

² 1 Corinthians i. 26-28, vi. 9-11.

³ 1 Corinthians i. 2 ; 2 Corinthians i. 1.

⁴ 2 Corinthians xi. 8, 9.

We cannot fail to observe the extreme brevity with which this period of the life of Paul is treated, although the splendor and importance of the city, the success of the preaching, and above all the remarkable subsequent history of the community combine to make it exceedingly important. Had the author no means of information at command? Or was the very fact that Corinth soon became the scene of divisions and sectarian animosities the true cause of his brevity? We are almost inclined to accept this latter explanation, especially when we remember how careful he is to make the main stress fall upon the Apostle's preaching at Athens, though he hardly left any traces behind him there.

Our means of filling in the gap are very scanty. We have already mentioned a few details gleaned from the first epistle to the Corinthians and the sixteenth chapter of Romans. We may add that if the first epistle to the Thessalonians is genuine, as we have assumed it to be, then it was written at Corinth during this period, in the name not only of Paul himself but also of Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy, who must therefore have been with the Apostle at the time, and who were also held in honor at Thessalonica as his fellow-laborers. This was the first occasion on which Paul had endeavored to make up by writing for the want of personal intercourse and preaching. The epistle, if authentic, is the earliest specimen of Christian literature. Its contents show what anxious care the Apostle had felt for this community, the preservation and prosperity of which he held to be of extremest consequence to the prospects of the gospel. He had dreaded the effect of the persecutions it had had to endure from the heathen population; but Timothy had now rejoiced his heart by bringing him a favorable report. It appeared, however, that his announcement of the approaching end of the world had produced a deeper impression than his exhortations to a spotless life, which he now repeated with great emphasis. He condemned the ill-balanced zeal which disturbed the lives of many of the converts, and insisted on the quiet and orderly behavior of which he had given them an example himself in diligently working for his own support. He also instructed them as to the prospects of those who died before the return of Jesus. They would not be at a disadvantage in any particular, as compared with those who lived to see it. When Jesus at a given sign — the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God — should come down from heaven, the believers who had died would first be raised, and then they would be caught up into

the air, together with the living, to escort Jesus to the earth in all his glory, and thenceforth to dwell with him for ever.

"The day of the Lord will come as secretly as a thief in the night. Let us therefore be wakeful and sober,"¹ intent on our salvation, persevering in our faith, and holy in our lives! This was doubtless the substance of his preaching at Corinth as at Thessalonica. It was this thought that urged him to incessant labors; and the field was not ungrateful, though it was very hard to till. The soil was fruitful, but was choked with most pernicious weeds. The internal condition of this Corinthian community, the first of any consequence that had been established in Greece, continued to demand the utmost care and attention, especially with regard to the lives of the members. The immorality of Corinth was notorious throughout the ancient world. It was here that Paul, from his own observations, drew his dark picture of the terrible moral degradation of the heathen world. Among the believers themselves were some who had formerly been guilty of all manner of unnatural offences; and though Paul said, "Now you are purified and hallowed and justified," yet in reality the force of evil custom was not broken in a day, or the moral renovation completed all at once.

At Antioch, at Thessalonica, and wherever the gospel was preached, but at Corinth more than anywhere, there was a sense in which the conversion of the heathen was a veritable casting out of devils;² for a spirit of loathsome impurity, with many another mighty demon of moral corruption, had to be expelled from them. We will therefore add, in this connection, a scene which appears in the first three Gospels, and represents this effect of the preaching of Christ in visible form. Though subsequent transformations and additions may greatly have obscured its original clearness, yet its signification is not doubtful. Let us judge for ourselves:—

Jesus had crossed the sea of Galilee in a southeastern direction, and landed in the region of Gadara (or Gerasa), which was largely inhabited by heathen.³ And there a man came rushing to meet him who had long been possessed by an unclean spirit. He was naked, and always lived among the graves. No one could tame him or even hold him in chains; for whenever any one had tried, the madman had broken the chains to pieces and shattered the fetters. Day

¹ 1 Thessalonians v. 2, 6.

² See pp. 282, 283.

³ See pp. 518, 543.

and night he lived among the tombs and caves, shrieking, cutting himself with stones, and falling upon the passers-by. Hardly had he seen Jesus afar off when he [rushed up to him, threw himself down before him, and] shrieked: “What do you want with me, O Jesus, son of the Most High? In the name of God, plunge me not into the tortures of the abyss until the last day comes!” [For he commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him.] “What is your name?” asked Jesus. “My name is Legion,” was the reply; for there was a host of demons in the unhappy man, and they begged Jesus passionately to allow them to enter into a herd of swine that was feeding there on the mountain. He gave them permission; and in a moment a thousand and yet another thousand swine had rushed over the precipice and were drowned in the sea. The swineherds fled in consternation, and reported what had happened in the city and the country round. Then the people came out to see for themselves, and there they saw the former demoniac, clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. In great dismay they implored Jesus to leave their country. [And when he embarked, the man he had rescued begged to be allowed to go with him, but was not permitted to do so. He must return to his own people and tell them how God had taken pity on him.]

So runs the story in its completed form, as given in Mark and Luke. Matthew has two demoniacs,¹ but in other respects is far shorter and simpler. The later traits in the story are partly due to misconception, for our Evangelists imagined that it was all to be taken literally; but we must not be misled by this. We must remember that to the Jews tombs and swine represented the most loathsome forms of uncleanness, and that swine stood specifically for heathenism regarded in its most repulsive light.² Observe again that every means of compulsion (by which the ancient systems of law are meant) failed even to restrain the host of unclean spirits (which incidentally represent the great number of heathen deities,³ as well as the moral corruption of the heathen); but soon the mighty word of Christ expels them, to the terror of the world which loves them. Again, when the healed demoniac is told to go to his own people, it is a charge to the converted heathen to communicate their privileges to others. Finally, we must remember that it was a settled custom—in a certain sense defensible—to ascribe to

¹ Compare p. 355.

² Compare 1 Corinthians x. 20.

² Compare p. 249.

Jesus himself whatever was done in his spirit and by his messengers.

The original meaning of this story therefore is distinct enough ; and it points us in the first instance to the fruits of the labors of Paul, which we shall find indicated more than once hereafter under the same emblematic form. His influence and the work that he accomplished might well be celebrated thus ! We have seen him carry the battle against heathenism into the heart of the ancient civilization. The gospel is now established in Europe.



CHAPTER VIII.

PAUL AT EPHESUS.

2 CORINTHIANS XI. 28-29; ACTS XVIII. 18-23, XIX. 1-20, 28-41;
GALATIANS; MARK IX. 38-40; MATTHEW XII. 22-37.¹

WITH Paul's journey from Corinth to Ephesus and his settlement in the latter city begins the closing period of his apostolic labors. This period extends over some four years (55-59 A.D.), and was marked by the same intensity of successful effort as before ; but it was mournfully distinguished by a violent and painful conflict with Jewish-Christianity, which threatened to make the communities Paul had established desert him.

His life had been one of restless activity ever since he began to preach the Christ. When we trace the extent of his journeys upon the map ; when we remember what varied and formidable difficulties the traveller of those days had to contend against, and how rare and imperfect the means and opportunities of locomotion were, especially such means as a simple workman could command,—and lastly, when we consider the perpetual dangers of every description to which Paul was constantly exposed, we are lost in admiration of his courage and perseverance,—especially when we reflect that the cause itself for which he traversed sea and land was one that involved him in constant difficulties and exposed him to ceaseless ridicule, opposition, and persecution. And now a far more grievous trouble was added to all these ; for the systematic agitation and opposition of Jewish believers threw his

¹ Luke ix. 49, 50, xi. 14, 15, 17-23, xii. 10; Mark iii. 22-30.

whole preaching of the gospel and the whole future of his communities into a position of extremest danger, threatening more than any thing else to destroy the work of his life. But though all hope sometimes seemed lost, though his heart full often bled from piercing wounds, though his bodily strength gave way under the strain, still he persevered; and the might of his spirit and the perseverance of his faith won glorious triumphs in the end.¹ Let us listen to his own account, given towards the close of this period, of his experiences for the previous twenty years.

Much against his will, for he hated boasting, he compares himself with his opponents. There was not one of them who had labored so unremittingly, who had so often braved maltreatment, imprisonment, and mortal peril for the sake of Christ, as he had done. “Five times have I received forty stripes save one from the Jews; thrice have I been beaten with rods [by the Romans]; once have I been stoned; thrice have I suffered shipwreck; a whole day and night have I been in the deep,”—tossed on a spar.

Here we may pause to note that the writer of the Acts says nothing of the heavy scourgings administered by the Jews in the synagogue, the like of which were sometimes fatal; that he only tells us of one occasion, at Philippi, on which the yet more barbarous Roman punishment was inflicted upon Paul; and that the latter’s Roman citizenship can only be maintained in the face of these scourgings on the supposition that the rights of the obscure Jew were constantly despised with arbitrary violence. The author of Acts has preserved the record of Paul’s being stoned (at Lystra),—an onslaught from which hardly any one had ever escaped alive; but the only shipwreck of which he has any thing to tell us took place after this time, and must have made a fourth.

Paul goes on to say that on his numerous journeys he had been in constant danger of drowning as he crossed over rivers, perhaps swimming, or of falling into the hands of robbers as he journeyed through unfrequented regions; that he had been “in danger from his fellow-countrymen,” who fiercely persecuted him as an apostate; “in danger from the heathen,” who only saw an atheist or rioter in their benefactor; “in danger in the cities” of tumultuous violence; “in danger in the deserts” of losing himself and dying of hunger; “in danger at sea” of being shipwrecked and drowned; in danger, above all, of seeing his work, his peace, his liberty,

¹ See, for example, 2 Corinthians i. 8, 9, ii. 4, iv. 16 ff., *et seq.*

perhaps his very life, destroyed by “false brethren,” his Jewish-Christian enemies.

“Toil and pain,” he continues, “and watching nights; hunger and thirst, and constant fasting; cold and nakedness,—these have been my life! And besides all the rest I have the constant daily thought and care for all the churches. Never is one of my converts weak in faith or conscience but I feel his weakness as though it were my own; never is one of them betrayed into apostasy or sin but my heart burns with shame and indignation.”

A year or two before, when he had recently undergone severe ill-treatment it would seem, he had written,¹ “Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear about on my body the marks that I belong to Jesus;” and not long afterwards² (in 58 A.D.), “Up to this very hour have hunger, thirst, nakedness, maltreatment, wandering, and heavy manual toil been our lot. When reviled we bless, when persecuted we endure it, when slandered we render consolation. We are held the very refuse and offscourings of the world to this day.” But all this did not crush him. “We are oppressed on every side,” he writes elsewhere,³ “but not afflicted; perplexed but not despairing; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed.” For it was in this very weakness that the might of his Lord revealed itself. “Therefore I rejoice in infirmities, in sufferings, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake, for when I am weakest then am I also strongest” in Him.⁴

We naturally refer these general descriptions drawn from the letters of Paul primarily to the period in which they were written, and we are perfectly safe in assigning some of the specific sufferings of imprisonment, scourging, and shipwreck to the same period. But here the author of Acts leaves us entirely in the dark. We saw just now, more clearly than ever; how very imperfect his account of the previous period was; but here he fails us altogether. A great deal of what he does tell us is impossible to believe, and he passes over matters of extreme importance in absolute silence. He says that before leaving Corinth Paul had taken the vow of a Nazarite. We know that this is a moral impossibility; but it is far from the only occasion upon which our author transforms the Apostle of the heathen into a rigid Jew.⁵ Then he makes him

¹ Galatians vi. 17. ² 1 Corinthians iv. 11-13. ³ 2 Corinthians iv. 8, 9.
⁴ 2 Corinthians xii. 10. ⁵ See pp. 540, 541, and chap. x. p. 611.

leave his friends Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus and take his journey — notwithstanding the entreaties of the Jews in the synagogue who desire him to stay with them — through Caesarea to Jerusalem. His object in going to the City of the Temple was to celebrate one of the Jewish feasts, and he took the opportunity of visiting the primitive community. Then he spent some time at Antioch, after which he returned through Galatia and Phrygia to Ephesus, where he stayed for three whole years. So says the book of Acts; but we know enough of Paul to be sure that he would not visit Jerusalem for the purpose here assigned to him, nor were his relations with the brethren there of such a character that he would wish to pay them a flying visit when there was no necessity for him to do so. We may therefore strike out the whole of this parenthetical journey, and assume that Paul established himself at once in Ephesus, the populous and stirring capital of the Roman province of Asia. We must not understand, however, that he made the city his permanent abode. It simply served as the centre of his activity, and from it he visited his converts in Galatia, founded fresh communities in various cities in the province,¹ perhaps crossed over for a visit to Corinth,² and perhaps even penetrated to the remote Illyria.³ After three years spent in Ephesus our authorities agree in making him leave this city, pass through Troas into Macedonia and thence to Achaia, spend several months in Corinth, and then return through Macedonia and travel along the coast of Asia Minor to Jerusalem.

Let us begin with the visit to Galatia, which took place early in the Ephesian period.

We have not forgotten the zeal and joy with which Paul's gospel was received and embraced by the Galatians. But some months after his departure certain emissaries from Jerusalem came into the district and gave the Galatians very different instruction from what they had received from Paul. They announced themselves as coming from the original community and the personal disciples of the Messiah whom Paul had preached, and declared that these disciples, who were the only qualified expounders of their Master's teaching, knew nothing of the repeal of the Old Covenant, of the Law and circumcision, or of a new way opened to salvation by the so-called justification by faith. What Paul said about all this being implied and proved by the death of Jesus on

¹ 1 Corinthians xvi. 19; Revelation ii., iii.

² 2 Corinthians xii. 14, xiii. 1.

³ Romans xv. 19.

the cross was palpably untrue, they urged ; for it was inconsistent with the unalterable fidelity and sanctity of God himself, and in direct contradiction with the Holy Scripture. And as for this Paul, he was not really an Apostle at all, but a man who had drawn all his true knowledge of Jesus from Peter, James, and the community at Jerusalem, had added many pernicious errors of his own, and now made most exorbitant pretensions. His followers would certainly be excluded from the rights of citizenship in the kingdom of the Messiah, which were not to be obtained by simple faith in the Christ without submission to the Law and circumcision. As for themselves, they had come in generous concern for the weal of the Galatians, to warn them against this false teaching, and to take them into Israel, the people of the Lord, so that they really might become heirs of the Messianic kingdom.

No wonder that the Galatians were shaken in their allegiance to Paul, and that many of them deserted him. A certain number of them, we know not how many, began to observe the Jewish feast days with scrupulous care, and even had themselves circumcised.¹ It seemed but reasonable to put greater confidence in the Twelve and in the Scripture than in the self-announced preacher who only came upon his own authority. But Paul's distress and indignation knew no bounds when he heard what had happened. He was drawn by the closest ties to this community of converts, as a mother is drawn to her children ; he had felt such special joy and satisfaction in them, — and now to think of their throwing off their allegiance and being faithless to his principles ! He hastened to visit them in person. Words ran high. He launched his curse upon all who preached another gospel than his. Sometimes he spoke so roundly, and told his Galatian friends the truth so plainly, that it almost seemed as if he had become their enemy. And when he had returned to Ephesus, he wrote them a letter with his own hand, which was quite against his usual practice. This letter was instinct with passion, burning alike with tenderness and indignation, overwhelming in its cogency, appalling in its bursts of stormy feeling, impetuous in its attacks, and melting in its appeals. In a word, it was the true reflection both of the character of the writer and of the conflict that raged in the bosom of Apostolic Christianity ; and, at the same time, it was the glowing vindication of Paul's gospel against the attacks of the believers of Jerusalem.

¹ Galatians i. 6, iii. 1, iv. 9, 10, v. 1 ff.

The first words of the epistle breathe a certain feeling of bitterness on the writer's part against those who would make him a disciple of men, — “Paul, an apostle, not of men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ himself and God, the Father.” Immediately after the superscription and greeting, he reproaches the Galatians with having fallen away from his gospel to another, which did not deserve the name; and repeats his curse upon the preachers who had seduced them. Then he gives an elaborate historical proof, drawn from his own past and from the critical events at Jerusalem and Antioch, of the divine origin and contents of his preaching to the heathen, and of his own apostolic independence. Nothing could be more false than that he owed any thing whatever to human intervention or influence. Then he shows that his gospel of justification by faith, without the Law, confirmed as it is by Christian experience, agrees with the divine revelation in history and in the Scripture. Was not the promise of salvation made to Abraham, the believer, more than four centuries before the Law? And is it not therefore evident that the latter was but a temporary dispensation made because of sin, and that since the Christ has come it has lost its authority over the faithful, the true children of Abraham, the heirs of the promise, just as much as the religious laws of the heathen have? Finally, he reminds them in a practical or hortatory conclusion that the obligation to purity of life has not been relaxed with the cancelling of the Law; for Christian liberty is not liberty to sin, but is life according to the spirit. He spares no one; he puts his adversaries in the most unfavorable light possible; he speaks in a tone of bitterness of the three “pillars” of the community, to whose authority an appeal against him was constantly made, and whom, alas! he could not claim as sympathizing with him. “Whoever troubles you,” he cries, “shall bear his judgment, *be he what he may!*” Nay, he pushes his own views to their extremest consequences, and declares that any one who allows himself to be circumcised thereby pledges himself to fulfil the whole Law which is impossible, has separated himself from the Christ, and has fallen from grace!

The effect produced by this memorable letter is not known; but a few years afterwards Paul speaks of certain injunctions he had recently laid upon the Galatians,¹ in a manner which implies the restoration of a good understanding between himself and the majority, if not the whole, of the Galatian

¹ See pp. 601, 602.

church. But this did not put an end to the contest, which in fact was only now beginning, and was destined to increase in violence. The fire, though smothered here, broke out with fresh violence elsewhere. Henceforth Jewish-Christian preachers were continually showing their zeal for the kingdom of God by appearing in Paul's communities, often armed with letters of commendation from Jerusalem, given them by the community at large or by the Twelve or by James, to strengthen them in their attempts to wrest the heathen converts from their apostle.

Here let us pause and try to form a clear conception of the extent and nature of the direct or indirect obstruction which Paul experienced from the Apostles, together with his own relations to them and the violent hostility between him and the Judaizing fanatics.

It stands to reason that if the Judaizers had not been in any way supported by the heads of the Jerusalem community, and had not been able to appeal to the personal friends and the brothers of Jesus, they would have had but little power to injure Paul. It is equally obvious that if Paul had been able to say that the Twelve distinctly repudiated these fanatics and, so far from making common cause with them, believed and taught as he did, he would not have omitted to do so, and would have extinguished the opposition instantly. And yet, however great and undeniable their differences may have been, we might well be inclined to ask how the Apostles, when once they had given the hand of fellowship to Paul, could bring themselves to furnish his enemies with letters of commendation!

But their conduct is far from inexplicable when we reflect that the scheme into which the three "pillars" had been forced by the mighty personal influence of Paul was nothing on their side but an uneasy compromise, resting on no reasonable principle, and had broken down as soon as it was tested at Antioch. What? Was there really to be one preaching of the Christ to the Jews and another to the heathen,—the one with and the other without the obligation to observe the Law? It must be either one or the other! Either observance of the Law was a condition of admittance into the kingdom of God or it was not. If it was, then the heathen must comply with it; if it was not, then the Jews were free from it. The Apostles, then, were compelled either to advance or to retreat; and they could not advance.¹ Paul, on the other

¹ See p. 553.

hand, had remained true to his position and his principles ; but most likely he had not laid great stress, when in Jerusalem, upon his belief that the Law was abrogated for the Jew as soon as he had faith in Christ, no less than for the heathen.¹ At any rate he had not worked it out and driven it to the extreme conclusions we have seen developed in the epistle to the Galatians ; he had not absolutely forbidden the observance of the Law on pain of exclusion from the kingdom of God,²—for this was a deduction which at that time he probably had not made himself, and which he subsequently withdrew when his mood was less bitter.³ Enough ! He may well have seemed to violate the convention in one way or another, and so to free the Apostles from their pledge to him. And in fact the agreement, “ You to the heathen, we to the Jews,” was impossible permanently to observe, especially since it made no provision for the peculiar circumstances of mixed communities.

Then we must remember that James was really a man of different spirit from Peter ; and we can readily believe that the systematic opposition which Paul encountered was chiefly his work, though the history of the Corinthian community will presently show us that Peter also had a hand in it. As for the third “ pillar,” John, he has left no certain trace behind him, and we cannot rely on a single statement made concerning him. But he left the impression of having been a rigid Jew ; and probably the following story, preserved by two of our Gospels, gives a faithful picture of him and of the general attitude of the Twelve towards Paul :—

On a certain day John said to Jesus : “ Master ! we saw a man who does not follow us casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow us.” But Jesus answered : “ Forbid him not. For no one who does a deed of power in my name can straightway speak ill of me ; and whoever is not against you is for you.”

Analogy and the circumstances of the case forbid us to think of veritable demoniacs, and indicate that the casting out of devils here intended is the conversion of heathen ; and this is further manifest from the expression of John, “ He follows not *us*,” and of Jesus, “ Whoever is not against *you* is for *you*.⁴ Had it been a real event taking place in the life of Jesus, John would have said “ *you*,” and Jesus “ *me*. ”

¹ Romans vii. 1–6; Galatians ii. 15–21.

² Romans xiv. See p. 608.

⁴ Mark ix. 40, after an amended version.

² Galatians v. 2–6.

Now Paul did not follow them ; that is to say, he did not submissively accept the views of John and his fellow Apostles, but preached a different gospel from theirs, and therefore they threw obstacles across his path. But, says our story, Jesus would emphatically have condemned their conduct. In the first place, the results of Paul's labors were a guarantee of his character ; and, in the next place, they must regard every one who did not oppose them as on their side.

And Paul did not oppose the Apostles. We can see clearly enough by the epistle to the Galatians how much it sometimes cost him. But he did make the effort, and refrained from attacking them. It was his desire to say nothing of the differences of views between himself and them, carefully to conceal their opposition, and to bridge over the gulf as best he might. And this is why we are left without any clear and certain indications on this important point. The interests of the good cause imperatively demanded this self-restraint on the part of Paul ; for it was excessively difficult for him, inasmuch as he had never known Jesus personally, to maintain his position against the Twelve in the eyes of the converts. Once only, when the necessity of proving his own independence compels him to recount his dispute with Peter at Antioch, — once only does he violate this reserve.

But he goes to work very differently with the Judaizing fanatics who appealed to the authority of the Twelve. He did not spare them for a moment, but sometimes attacked them with the greatest violence, and even threw aspersions on their character. In short, he returned their criminations with interest.¹ He called them “ false apostles, hypocritical laborers, who put on the appearance of apostles of Christ. What wonder ? Did not Satan himself put on the appearance of an angel of light ? And was it any thing strange for his servants to put on the appearance of the servants of righteousness ? But their end should be in accordance with their deeds ! ”² Such were the recriminations that passed backwards and forwards ;³ and it is exceedingly curious to note the traces of this conflict, which was carried on for many and many a year, still left in our Gospels. Thus we find the following words laid by the Jewish-Christians upon the Master's lips : “ I tell you truly, that, while this heaven and earth endure, not one tittle or one iota of the Law shall fail till all be

¹ See pp. 546, 547, and Philippians iii. 2; see chap. xi. p. 624.

² 2 Corinthians xi. 13-15.

³ Revelation ii. 2, 9, 20, 24, *et seq.* See chap. xii. p. 643.

strictly kept. And whosoever shall cancel even the smallest of these commandments, and teach others to do so, shall be counted the least in the kingdom of heaven ; but whosoever shall keep them all, and teach others to do so, shall be counted great in the kingdom of heaven.”¹ It is obvious that Jesus could not have spoken in such a strain without absolutely contradicting himself ; but those who put the words upon his lips as a condemnation of Paul and his supporters did not see this incongruity, and in a certain sense they acted in good faith. Again, when they made Jesus forbid the preaching to the heathen in the words, “ Give not that which is holy to the dogs nor throw your pearls before the swine, lest they should trample them under their feet and then turn upon you and rend you,”² they meant to represent the sufferings endured by the messengers to the heathen as nothing in the least to their honor, but simply as the result of their own perversity ; but they did not see that at the same time they were branding the conduct of Jesus himself in associating with publicans and sinners. Still more violent is the attack contained in the warning, of no doubtful purport, put into the mouth of Jesus, “ Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but are ravening wolves within ! ”³ It appears that Jesus had spoken in tones of warning of the numbers who would find themselves deceived in their expectations when the kingdom of God should come, and the orthodox party gave his words a turn which converted them into a condemnation of Paul and his fellow-laborers ; for the latter appealed to the results of their labors and the signal manifestations of the Spirit in their communities as the unmistakable guarantee of their mission and the stamp of God’s approval ;⁴ but their opponents made Jesus utter the sentence of condemnation upon those who, while casting out devils (converting heathen) neglected the Law : “ Many will say to me on the last day, ‘ Lord, Lord ! have we not labored as prophets in thy name, and in thy name cast out demons, and in thy name done many deeds of power ? ’ And then shall I answer them, ‘ Never have I acknowledged or known you. Away from me ye who neglect God’s law ! ’ ”⁵

But the Pauline Christians paid them back in the same coin. They too made use of that very saying of the Master’s, which their adversaries turned against them ; but in their

¹ Matthew v. 18, 19.

² Matthew vii. 6.

³ Matthew vii. 15.

⁴ Galatians ii. 7, 9, iii. 2, 5 *et seq.*

⁵ Matthew vii. 22, 23.

hands it became a threat against the Jewish-Christians,—for these latter were constantly appealing, against the Apostle of the heathen and his followers, to the personal relations in which they or their leaders had stood to Jesus;¹ and accordingly the Paulinists made Jesus say: “When you are rejected and shut out from the kingdom of God,² you will begin to say, ‘We have eaten and drunk before thy very eyes, and in our streets hast thou taught.’ But the Christ will answer, ‘I tell you I know not whence you are. Away from me all ye workers of unrighteousness!’”³ They disarmed the solemn declaration of the permanent validity of the whole Law by modifying it thus: “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of my words to fail.”⁴ Again, they make the Master chastise with ruthless severity the “false brothers,” whose zeal carried them far and near to propagate Jewish-Christian principles in the communities of heathen converts: “You traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when he is gained you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves,”—that is to say, twice as intolerant and fanatical.⁵ Such at least we may regard with high probability as the original significance of this attack, which is now incorporated in the celebrated denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, culminating in the outburst, “Ye serpents! ye generation of vipers! How shall ye escape the fire of gehenna?”⁶ There at any rate it is quite out of place, for the Jews were never zealous proselytizers. Just in the same way we find elsewhere the Judaizing zealots who ascribed the success of Paul and his fellow-workers to an alliance with the prince of the false gods or demons, the god of the heathen world, represented as Pharisees who slander Jesus but are refuted and put to shame by him. We find this picture in all the three Gospels:—

One day they brought a man to Jesus who was possessed by a devil that made him blind and dumb. He healed him, so that he could see and speak. Then the multitudes were filled with amazement, and asked, “May not this man be the son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard it they said, “He only drives out demons by the help of Beelzebul, their prince.” Then Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Any kingdom that divides against itself is near its fall, and no city or family that is divided against itself can stand; and if

¹ 1 Corinthians i. 12; 2 Corinthians x. 7.

² See pp. 342, 343.

³ Luke xiii. 26, 27.

⁴ Luke xvi. 17, after another version

⁵ Matthew xxiii. 15.

⁶ Matthew xxiii. 33.

Satan is driving out Satan, then he is divided against himself, and how can his kingdom stand? And again, if I cast out demons in the might of Beelzebul, in whose might do your followers cast them out? Let them be your judges! But if I cast them out by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come to you. For how can any one go into a strong man's house and take away his goods unless he has first bound him? If he has bound him, he can do as he will. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not help me to gather is scattering abroad. And therefore I tell you that every kind of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men except blasphemy against the Spirit. Even those who speak against the Son of Man may be forgiven; but he who speaks against the Holy Spirit shall neither be forgiven in this world nor in the world to come."

So the story is told in Matthew, who gives it again elsewhere but without repeating the refutation and rebuke.¹ It is in this connection that he gives the sayings of Jesus about "the tree and its fruits," and about the account which men will have to give at the last judgment of every idle word they have spoken, so that they may be admitted or excluded, according to what they have said.² Mark has modified or dropped more than one detail in the miracle itself, in the charge that is founded on it and in the defence of Jesus. In fact, he misunderstands the whole, and presents it in such a form that we can hardly recognize its original meaning. The third Gospel also obscures the sense by separating passages that belong to each other. Taken literally, the whole thing is hardly comprehensible; and neither the proof that the kingdom of Satan would be divided against itself, nor the appeal to what the disciples of the Pharisees themselves are doing, nor the distinction between blasphemy against the Son of Man and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, have any intelligible meaning. This final distinction obviously transports us to the time when Jesus was already gone,—to the age of the Spirit, when Paul and his fellow-laborers converted the blind heathen who were helplessly swayed with the dumb idols.³ His opponents strove to obliterate the powerful impression which his successful labors had produced by ascribing the result to an alliance with Satan.⁴ From their own point of view they were partially justified in this. Was it not hea-

¹ Matthew ix. 32-34.

² See p. 159, and Matthew xii. 36, 37.

³ Compare Matthew xii. 22 with Romans ii. 19; 1 Corinthians xii. 2.

⁴ Revelation ii. 2, 9, 13, 24.

thenish (that is devilish) doctrine to teach that the Law was abrogated, that a heathen mode of life was permissible, and even that eating meat from animals sacrificed to idols was a matter of no consequence? But Paul's friends were deeply wounded by this aspersion. It was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the workings of which were so manifest in the progress of the heathen conversions and in the hearts of the Greek believers. This blasphemy implied more guilt, more obstinate and wilful blindness, and was therefore less to be forgiven, than the rejection of Jesus himself in days gone by at the hands of the Jews. And when the Jewish-Christians themselves made converts, did they use any other means than Paul's? Would Satan himself help to convert his own worshippers to God? Was it not clear, on the contrary, that this mighty ruler of the world was bound, and that one yet stronger than himself had broken into his house and was taking his possessions from him? It was the work of God's Spirit. It was the proof that his kingdom was at hand. All who at this supreme hour were not helping to gather into the fold, all who were introducing divisions and confusion, were resisting the Christ. Let every man beware of the unpardonable sin!

Observe the accuracy with which the parties and the weapons they used are sketched! And if we compare this story with the one already given¹ about John's appeal to Jesus, we shall see how widely the attitude of the Apostles themselves toward the great teacher of the heathen differed from that of the Judaizing fanatics who appealed to their authority. The former did indeed throw obstacles in his way, but without a thought of animosity, without the least ascription of unworthy motives to him; the latter shrank from no means of destroying his influence,—threw vile aspersions on his personal motives, blackened his character, and denounced him as an emissary of Satan. Paul, on his side, does not attack the Apostles, even though he thinks them open to blame; but both he and his friends pronounce the heaviest condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, upon the Judaizers.

From this digression let us now return to the work of the Apostle in the province of Asia. This work centred round Ephesus, the capital of the province, the greatest and most important commercial city, and the great emporium of Asia Minor. Here Paul resumed his trade, and very likely lived,

¹ See p. 583.

as he had done at Corinth, with his friends Aquila and Priscilla, at whose house a band of believers gradually began to hold their regular meetings.¹ According to Acts, Paul began by preaching for three months in the synagogue, but met with so much unbelief and opposition on the part of some of the Jews that he was compelled to withdraw together with his followers. After this he taught every day in “the school of Tyrannus;” but whether this was simply the name of a certain lecture hall, or whether Tyrannus was a converted heathen, we are not told. This went on for two years, until—as our author says with rhetorical exaggeration—all the inhabitants of the province, both Jews and Greeks, had heard the word of the Lord. He also gives us indirectly to understand that Paul found a community of converted Jews already established at Ephesus, and that they now joined him.² These details are not certain, but they may be true.

On the other hand, the three following stories are all of them open to the gravest suspicion. They are given in the book of Acts, and are intended to vindicate Paul’s apostolic dignity:—

The first informs us that he found a band of about twelve believers at Ephesus; and that when he asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit, they answered that they had never so much as heard that there was any Holy Spirit, or that any one could receive it at all. Then it appeared that they had only received the baptism of John, with the obligation to repent and believe in the future Messiah. When Paul had bettered their knowledge they desired to be baptized as believers in Jesus; and when he laid his hands upon them they received the Holy Spirit, spoke with tongues, and prophesied. This story is transparently intended to vindicate Paul’s equality in privilege with Peter and John, whom we shall presently see giving the Holy Spirit to believers who had not yet received it, by laying their hands upon them.³ But though it is out of the question to accept the story as it stands, yet we dare not say that no historical reminiscence lies at the root of it.

The second story, which serves the same purpose as the first, is a pure fiction. God worked wonderful miracles by the hand of Paul, so that sick people were actually cured and demons expelled by napkins or aprons taken from his person

¹ See p. 570, and 1 Corinthians xvi. 19 (where the Roman Catholic version reads “Aquila and Priscilla, whose guest I am”).

² Acts xviii. 27, xix. 9.

³ Acts viii. 15–17.

to the sufferers.¹ Really we might be reading a mediaeval legend of a saint's or martyr's relics!

The third story tells us how the fame of Paul became so great that it excited emulation. Certain wandering Jewish exorcists, the seven sons (or disciples) of the high priest Sceva, tried the efficacy of the name of Jesus in a magical formula: "I adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches." But the evil spirit upon whom they tried it answered: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" And therewith the demoniac leaped upon them, and they rushed, stripped and bleeding, out of the house. All the Jews and Greeks in Ephesus heard of this and were greatly terrified, while the name of Jesus rose high in fame. Many Christians came to confess the superstitious practices of which they had formerly been guilty, and many who had busied themselves with magic, for which Ephesus was notorious, brought their books together and burned them in public to the value of fifty thousand drachmas (say two thousand pounds sterling). Thus the gospel spread and prospered mightily. Here again the account is full of exaggerations, especially as to the value of the books; for the Christians were most of them in needy circumstances. We must leave it undecided whether the kernel of this story about the exorcists is historical or symbolical.

But in spite of all this uncertainty it is clear enough that the period we are considering was one of extreme importance in the spread of Christianity. Personally, in the course of his expeditions round about, or indirectly by means of the fellow-laborers he sent out to preach, Paul established flourishing communities in various cities of Asia,² such as Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Colossæ, and Hierapolis. These churches were distinguished by their faithful and patient perseverance under suffering, their love and good works, and in some cases their steadfast attachment to the Pauline gospel.³ We cannot say whether Barnabas and Silas were still among Paul's fellow-laborers; honorable mention, however, is made not only of Titus and Timothy, but of many others, such as Sosthenes and Tychicus, Gaius and Aristarchus the Macedonians, Erastus the Corinthian, and in special connection with Ephesus, Onesiphorus, a faithful friend of the Apostle; at Colossæ, Epaphras, Philemon, and Archippus; at Laodicea, Nympha. Epaphras, indeed, ap-

¹ See p. 496.

² 1 Corinthians xvi. 19; Revelation i. 4, 11.

³ Revelation ii. 3, 10, 13, 19, 14, 15, 20.

pears to have been the real evangelist of Colossæ, and to have rendered great services to the neighboring communities of Laodicea and Hierapolis.¹ Perhaps we may extend this list considerably; for the sixteenth chapter of Romans, though it certainly does not belong to the epistle to which it is now appended, may really be from the hand of Paul; and some scholars have supposed that it is a letter to the believers at Ephesus in commendation of the deaconess Phœbe. In that case we must add to the Apostle's Ephesian fellow-laborers the names of Epenetus, the first-fruits to Christ from Asia; of Andronicus and Junius, relatives of Paul and on one occasion his fellow-prisoners, who took an honorable position as messengers of Christ, and had joined the faithful before Paul himself. Further, Urbanus and Apelles; certain women such as Maria, who was of much service at Ephesus; Tryphena, Tryphosa, and above all Persis,—all of them zealous laborers for the gospel. On the same supposition of authenticity, we may also add that Paul was warmly attached to a certain Rufus, possibly the son of Simon of Cyrene,² and still more to his mother, who had been like a mother to the Apostle himself. And to these we must add Amplias and Stachys, Paul's own relative Herodion, and many others. In a word, there were numbers of believers, glowing with zeal for the good cause, who were ready to preach in their own cities, to carry the message elsewhere, and in some cases to travel from place to place in a more or less extended district. In the latter case they would often have to suspend or relinquish their occupations; and for their benefit Paul established the rule, “Let him who is taught in the word impart to the teacher of all his goods,”³ and laid it down in general as an ordinance of Christ that “those who preach the gospel should also live by the gospel,”—a right, however, which he declined to exercise himself.⁴

Meanwhile, however fruitful were the labors of the Apostle and his supporters, they had to struggle against manifold obstacles and many kinds of hindrance and persecution. Paul himself declared that Ephesus offered a wide and fruitful field for the extension of the gospel in the city and the district. “A great and mighty door is open to me,” he cried; but he was forced to add at once, “there are many adversaries.”⁵ If only the believers would have all joined hand in

¹ Colossians i. 7, v. 12, 13.

² See p. 448.

³ Galatians vi. 6

⁴ 1 Corinthians ix. 4-18.

⁵ 1 Corinthians xv. 9.

hand ! But alas ! though we have no direct testimony, we may well surmise that even during these years Jewish-Christian emissaries had presented themselves in the capital as well as elsewhere in Asia, had set their feet across the path of Paul, and had drawn away many of his converts. If it is true, as we saw stated but now, that he found a small community of converted Jews on his first arrival, then the conflict was inevitable. But independently of this, when we reflect that a systematic and embittered opposition on the part of the Jewish-Christians had been organized some years ago at Antioch, and was appearing in Galatia and at Corinth at this very time, we can hardly doubt that the same party spirit raised its head at Ephesus with equal boldness and determination, and that emissaries from Jerusalem arrived to withdraw the converted heathen from Paul's influence, to incorporate them into the people of the Lord if only as "proselytes of the gate," to detach them from their gentile surroundings, and wean them from their gentile life. This would also account for the bitterness with which Paul denounces these orthodox agitators as "hypocrites" in the letters of this period ; and indeed the dangers from "false brothers," of which he speaks as threatening his liberty or life, must obviously be understood as resulting from events that fall within this period. This is another indication of the violence of the contest. Finally, some ten years later a Jewish-Christian writer singles out Ephesus and Smyrna for special praise because they had long ago tried Paul and rejected him, and learned to hate his gospel and his followers.¹

Divisions and discord rending the bosom of the community, calumny and bitter hostility pursuing him on his own ground ! Alas, what sorrow for the Apostle ! And all this just when perfect unanimity was such a crying necessity ! If thus at strife with one another, how were they to hold out against the hatred and attacks of the Jews,² who were especially numerous at Ephesus ? How were they to resist the crushing force of heathen society, which threatened to bear down their whole work by sheer violence, and which had such varied and terrible power to seduce the weaker brethren to the foulness of heathen morals or the superstitiousness of heathen religion ? We have already heard from Paul's own lips how he felt for and with those who were exposed to such temptation. "Who is weak without my being weak with him ? Who stumbles without my burning?" and it must be to the

¹ Revelation ii. 2-6, 9.

² 2 Corinthians xi. 26, Acts xx. 19.

constant exposure to violence that Paul chiefly alludes when he speaks of the “many adversaries.” But nothing quenched his zeal or broke his elasticity. Every thing increased them. There was an ample and promising field of labor open to him, and that was enough! In the spring of 58 A.D. he speaks of it as a well-known fact that the believers, or at least the preachers, of the gospel “are in peril every hour,” and declares of himself that he “dies every day,” and records, with some special circumstance in his mind apparently, that he “fought with wild beasts at Ephesus,” — that is to say, was engaged in a conflict with savage and blood-thirsty men in which his life trembled in the balance.¹ Was it then, or on some subsequent occasion, that Aquila and Priscilla risked their lives to save him? Dangers constantly increased, and at last they rose to such a height that a few weeks after he had left Ephesus he wrote of the great oppression which had lately come upon him in Asia, against which his powers had no longer been able to endure, and under which he had lost every ray of hope that his life would be preserved, when “God rescued him out of so great a death.”²

The book of Acts further records an event to which Paul makes no separate reference, but which is doubtless in the main historical, though the account is sometimes rather highly colored. We must know then that Ephesus was specially devoted to the worship of the goddess Artemis (Diana), whose image cut out of vine wood was said to have fallen down from heaven, and was kept in a magnificent temple which ranked as one of the seven wonders of the world. Now little models of this temple, worked in silver, were greatly sought after, especially by strangers who came to pay their reverence to the goddess; and when Paul had been preaching two or three years in Ephesus and the neighborhood a prominent silversmith of the name of Demetrius called together his numerous skilled workmen and laborers, and pointed out to them what damage Paul was doing to their trade and to the worship of their goddess by making such hosts of worshippers in Ephesus and almost all of Asia desert the gods. The combination of religious and selfish motives soon began to work. “Glory to the Ephesian Artemis!” cried the assembly, and a formidable tumult was at once on foot. The rioters, as a single man, made for the theatre where popular assemblies were usually held, and in which more than fifty thousand people could meet. They had seized

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 30-32.

² 2 Corinthians i. 8-10.

two of Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus of Macedonia, and Paul himself would have gone out among the people had he not been restrained by the disciples, and implored by some of the Asiarchs themselves who were friendly to him not to enter the theatre. These Asiarchs were a college of ten distinguished citizens, appointed for a year to exercise a general superintendence over religious affairs, and to provide popular games for the religious festivals at their own expense. Boundless confusion reigned in the theatre. One raised one cry and another another, and most of them did not so much as know why they were there. A certain Alexander was pushed forward by the Jews, and was going to speak a word in defence ; but no sooner was he seen to be a Jew than a thousand throats roared out “ Great is Artemis of the Ephesians ! ” as if they would never stop.

After nearly two hours the town clerk succeeded in getting silence. He went on to pacify the mob with the greatest tact. The privileges of Ephesus, he said, as the city of Artemis and the guardian of her heavenly image, were known to all the world, and could not be disputed ; so there was no need to make a tumult or do any thing rash to assert them. As for these two Macedonians, they had neither robbed the temples nor blasphemed the gods. If Demetrius and his friends had any complaints to urge against them, they could bring them before the magistrates when the courts were sitting ; and if any further steps were necessary, they must be submitted to an assembly of the people in due form. There was a proper way of doing every thing, and these tumultuous and unreasonable proceedings might get them into trouble as rioters. After this he dismissed the people, and before long the commotion had completely subsided.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMMUNITY AT CORINTH AND THE LETTER TO
ROME.

ACTS XIX. 21, 22, XX. 1-6, XVIII. 24-28; 1 CORINTHIANS;
2 CORINTHIANS; ROMANS.

SHORTLY after the event we have just recorded, Paul called the Christians of Ephesus together to take leave of them. Independently of this riot he had already resolved to quit Ephesus and Asia for Macedonia and Achaia.¹ A variety of motives, some of them connected with far-reaching projects to which we shall presently return, had combined to dictate this resolution.

The community at Corinth was the object of the Apostle's special concern, and he longed to be with the brethren there once more. If, as we have supposed, he had paid them a visit from Ephesus, some time before, it can only have been a short one; and, in consequence of the misconduct of some of the Christians and the severity with which he had been compelled to chastise them, it had left a painful impression behind it.² He had also sent a letter to Corinth; but it is now lost, and we only know that it contained the injunction to avoid intercourse with immoral persons. Paul meant immoral members of the community; but the Corinthians understood his expression generally, and this made the injunction absolutely impossible to comply with, and therefore foolish. He was thus compelled to return to the same point afterwards and explain that the judgment of the heathen must be left with God; but that if a Christian became guilty of unchastity, drunkenness, idolatry, or extortion, he must be excluded from the tables of the brethren.³ Immorality, sometimes of a very gross description, still disgraced the community, and was but too readily condoned; and Paul demanded that a certain notorious offender should be punished with extreme severity, by being solemnly given up to Satan, the god of the heathen world, by the curse of excommunication.⁴ But there were other matters also in which this church gave Paul occasion for anxiety and sorrow.

¹ 1 Corinthians xvi. 5-9.

² 1 Corinthians v. 9-13.

³ 2 Corinthians xiii. 1, 2, ii. 1, xii. 14, 21.

⁴ 1 Corinthians v. 1 ff.

There was much, however, in which he could heartily rejoice, and with this we will begin. The community had been greatly strengthened and extended, especially by the preaching of a certain Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria, well skilled in the symbolical interpretation of the Scripture, which flourished in that city. Arriving at Ephesus in Paul's absence, he had been won for the Pauline gospel by Aquila and Priscilla, had come over with letters of commendation to Achaia, and had labored with great success. All this is told us in the book of Acts and is indirectly confirmed by Paul himself; for he speaks of Apollos as a fellow-worker of one mind with him, who had great influence at Corinth, and had watered what he himself had sown. We also read in Acts that Apollos taught Christianity and preached about Jesus before he had received the instructions of Aquila and Priscilla, although, like the twelve disciples of whom we heard just now,¹ he only knew the baptism of John; and further, that at Corinth he busied himself exclusively with the refutation of the Jews. All this may go for what it is worth.

The community at Corinth not only grew but was also marked by great wealth of spiritual gifts. It could boast of many preachers, many members distinguished by their keenness of spiritual vision, besides prophets, ordinary teachers, deacons and deaconesses who looked after the poor and sick; others who by prayer and the laying on of hands, or by the application of special remedies, healed the sick or did other deeds of power. Parallels to these phenomena may be found elsewhere, in times and amidst circles where great spiritual excitement has prevailed. Above all, there were great numbers who spoke in tongues.² They all looked forward to the return of the Christ with a longing so intense that some of them, perceiving that their beloved relatives who had died unbaptized would be excluded from the blessings of the Golden Age, had themselves baptized for them in hopes of its being accepted on their behalf.³

This practice, however superstitious, did no great harm; but the self-exaltation of which the brethren were guilty did great harm indeed. They were so wise in their own eyes that they cared for nothing and for nobody, and considered themselves qualified to pass sentence from above upon every one, including Paul himself. The arrogance of some of them was simply unbounded.⁴ Connected with all this was a spirit of

¹ See pp. 588, 589.

² 1 Corinthians xv. 29.

³ 1 Corinthians i. 5, 7, xii. 4-11, 28.

⁴ 1 Corinthians iii. 18, iv. 3, 7 ff., 18.

sectarianism which wofully divided the community. A Jewish-Christian party had been formed here also. It appealed, and must have had some right or some reason in its appeal, to the authority of Cephas (Peter) the Apostle of the Jews ; it called itself after him, and denied or detracted from the apostolic dignity of Paul.¹ The liberal party called themselves followers of Paul in distinction from the others. But here the matter did not rest. There were some of the liberals who had perhaps been converted by Apollos and felt warmly attached to him ; or perhaps they had learned to look down upon Paul's simple teaching when they had come under the spell of the Alexandrian's brilliant gifts, his eloquent address, his speculative profundity, and his symbolical interpretation of the Scriptures. Be this as it may, they called themselves after Apollos. Again, there was a section of the orthodox party that raised another cry. They had probably come from Jerusalem² provided with letters of commendation ; and by way of throwing Paul (who had never been in any personal relations with the Christ) into the shade, and so excluding him and all his party, they hit upon the idea of calling themselves and their followers the adherents of Christ, on the ground that they had known the Christ themselves, or at any rate were in close relations with his genuine Apostles.³

The Jewish-Christian party showed its usual animosity against the Apostle of the heathen, as we may see from a single example. Paul's opponents managed to turn the very disinterestedness which formed so sharp a contrast with the conduct of the new Palestinian preachers into a weapon against him. They told the Corinthians that his settled principle of never receiving any thing from them showed that he was himself conscious that he had no real claim to the name of Apostle, and had not been sent by the Christ.⁴ There is every indication that in Corinth even more than elsewhere the conflict took a personal character, to which the principles at issue were more or less subordinated. But the two aspects of the dispute were always closely connected together. The Jewish-Christian teachers, however, do not seem to have pitched their claims so high in Corinth as they had done in Galatia. Apparently they did not insist upon circumcision, the observance of Jewish rest-days, feasts, and fasts, or other such matters. Indeed, it would seem that

¹ See p. 549.

² 2 Corinthians iii. 1, xi. 22.

³ 1 Corinthians i. 12, ii. 4, iii. 4, 22; 2 Corinthians x. 7; compare p. 585.

⁴ 1 Corinthians ix. 1 ff.

even in Galatia they had not demanded the strict observance of the whole Law;¹ and we can therefore well believe that here, in the land of culture, they shrank from the insuperable difficulties of introducing the national usages that rendered them ridiculous in Grecian eyes.² Finally, the love of argument and disputation so characteristic of the Greeks contributed powerfully towards the undesirable state of things at Corinth by making the Christians look upon the gospel as a matter of doctrine rather than life, and eagerly seek out points upon which they could argue with each other.

Paul was further grieved by the want of love manifested in the fact that the Christians sometimes had lawsuits with each other rather than risk any loss or iujustice; and even called each other before the heathen judges instead of at any rate choosing brethren to act as arbitrators in their quarrels.³ And the same want of love was manifested at the brotherly meals of the faithful, consecrated to the united commemoration of the Lord; for the richer members had fallen into the evil habit of seizing with indecorous haste what they had brought themselves, instead of waiting till the food was served round and each could have his share,—so that, while they were feasting themselves sometimes to excess, others who had not been able to bring any thing with them were obliged to look on in hunger, unless they happened to belong to their party or to be among their friends. The Apostle, regarding this as a slight to the community and an insult to the poor, held it an abuse of the institution of the common meal, and recognized the prevalence of sickness and death among the brethren as its punishment.⁴

Yet, again, the confusion that prevailed in the meetings of the community was a source of pain to the Apostle. All strove to be first, and mutual service was regarded as humiliating. Women came forward at these meetings, which Paul regarded as very scandalous. They even led in prayer and prophecy with their heads unveiled. Sometimes every one attempted to prophesy at the same time, and all vied with each other for attention. Finally, speaking with tongues was carried to such an excess that a heathen casually entering the assembly would suppose that they were raving.⁵

Paul had received some information on these points, especially about the sectarian jealousies, from the members of

¹ Galatians vi. 13, v. 3.

² 1 Corinthians vii. 18.

³ 1 Corinthians vi. 1 ff.; compare Ma'thew v. 39-41.

⁴ 1 Corinthians xi. 17 ff.

⁵ 1 Corinthians xi. 2 ff., xii. 1 ff., xiv.

a certain Cloe's household. Subsequently he had received a letter from the Corinthian community,—probably brought to him by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus,—asking for instructions as to marriage and the unmarried state, the propriety of joining in sacrificial meals and eating the flesh of animals that had been sacrificed, the value of spiritual gifts, and other matters.¹ The bearers of this letter gave him full information of the state of things at Corinth; and though he intended soon to go there himself and put the arrogant pretenders who had spoken so contemptuously of him to the test, he determined first to send Timothy, his beloved and trusted son in the Lord, to remind the Corinthians how he ordered his life as the messenger of Christ, and how he preached everywhere and in all the churches. Meanwhile he gave a second letter (*1 Corinthians*) to the three Corinthian delegates, who were now about to return, and would arrive at Corinth before Timothy who was travelling through Macedonia. In this letter he begged the community to receive Timothy, as a worthy preacher of the gospel, with friendship and respect, that he might not be too diffident; and then to escort him on his way back. Apollos was with Paul at Ephesus at this time, and not at Corinth; and Paul had encouraged him, perhaps at the instance of the Corinthians, to accompany Stephanus and the other two to Corinth, and help, among other things, to check the party feeling. But Apollos had steadily declined, saying he could not go till it fell in with his plans to do so.²

The letter was written in Paul's own name and in that of Sosthenes, to whom, perhaps, he dictated it. This Sosthenes was one of the brethren held in high estimation at Corinth, and happened to be with Paul at the time. After a friendly introduction, the letter begins with a rebuke of sectarianism. As long as one says, “I am of Paul;” another, “I of Apollos;” a third, “I of Cephas;” a fourth, “I of Christ;”—they all show that they are far from the spirituality of the gospel, and forget that all the preachers are but servants of God—no more. Presently he begins to answer their specific questions: It is good to marry, but considering how near the world is to its end it is better still not to marry; but in this matter every one must be guided by his knowledge of himself, must act circumspectly, and must remember what is due to others. The use of meat from beasts that have been

¹ *1 Corinthians* i. 11, vii. 1 ff., viii. 1 ff., xii. 1 ff., xv. 1 ff., xvi. 17.

² *1 Corinthians* iv. 17, xvi. 10-12.

sacrificed to idols is a matter of indifference to those who really understand the subject and have risen above all prejudice ; but for fear of inducing the brother of more contracted views, who looks upon it as a sin, to follow such an example and so violate his own conscience, it is better to abstain from sitting at meat in an idol's temple. Had not he, Paul, given a lifelong example of disinterested self-sacrifice ? And, indeed, he must distinctly forbid their joining in sacrificial meals, for it was a sort of intercourse with demons ; but meat purchased in the market might be eaten with a clear conscience, whether sacrificed to idols or not, provided always that it gave no offence. Then Paul goes on to treat at length of spiritual gifts, especially speaking with tongues, and lays it down that no more than two, or at most three, should make themselves heard at one meeting, and that only in succession and when there was some one present who could interpret the rapturous utterances. He meets the doubts entertained as to the resurrection chiefly by an appeal to the resurrection of Christ, and he speaks of the glorified body of the future. He repeatedly rebukes immorality, arrogance, want of love, disorderly conduct, and an unseemly celebration of the Lord's Supper. Then he concludes by pressing the collection for the believers at Jerusalem upon the attention of the brethren, by telling them of his future plans, and by giving them his greeting.

We will only transcribe the well-known verses in which the Apostle celebrates the glory of love, as opposed to the idle self-exaltation of the Corinthians, with their pride in their several spiritual gifts and their unchristian conduct :¹ —

“ Earnestly seek the best gifts. But let me show you the way of ways.

“ I may speak in tongues as exalted as man can utter, nay in the tongues of the angels themselves, but if I have not love I am a piece of sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. I may be such a prophet that I understand all the truths of faith hitherto unknown, and penetrate to all knowledge of God ; I may have the full measure of faith so that I can move mountains,—but if I have not love I am nothing. I may bestow all my goods on the poor ; I may give my very body to be burned,—but if I have not love it all avails me nothing !

“ Love is long-suffering and kind. Love envies not, parades not itself, and is not puffed up ; is not unseemly or grasping, or easily provoked. Love imputes evil to no one, takes no

¹ 1 Corinthians xii. 31-xiv. 1a.

pleasure in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth in all things true and noble ; covers all evil, believes all good, hopes against hope, and bears every thing.

“ Love never fails. Prophecies shall come to an end, speaking in tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish away ; for our knowledge is incomplete, our prophesying is imperfect, and when the perfect state has come then these imperfect things must be banished. When I was a child I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I judged as a child ; but now that I have become a man I have put childish things away. For now we see the things above as we see the reflection of the heavens in the water, all confused ; but in the kingdom of God we shall see them right before us. Now I only know in part ; but then I shall know as perfectly as I am known by God.

“ And so these three — faith, hope, and love — endure for ever ; and the greatest of them is love.

“ Follow after love !”

This letter was dispatched before Easter in the year 58 A.D.¹ It was then the Apostle’s intention to remain a few months longer at Ephesus, to seize the abundant and favorable opportunities of preaching the gospel there and to repel the manifold opposition. After Pentecost he intended to go through Macedonia to Corinth to spend some time, perhaps to winter, there.²

He was now eagerly employed, among other things, in giving effect to his promise to make a collection for the community of Jerusalem among the converts of his own churches.³ He had already made one such collection, soon after the convention at Jerusalem most likely. But this time, after the lapse of years, he was exceedingly anxious to collect as large a sum as possible ; for if he could make up a handsome amount he would not send it (as he intended to do should it prove inconsiderable) by representatives of the various congregations, accompanied by a letter of introduction, but he would go with them himself in the hope that he might then be well received in the City of the Temple, and might succeed in putting an end to the baneful opposition which was directed thence against his preaching.⁴ It was excessively difficult for him permanently to maintain his position against the emissaries from Jerusalem, and to prevent his converts from falling away from him. The liberality of his heathen converts,

¹ See 1 Corinthians v. 7, 8.

² See pp. 550, 551.

³ 1 Corinthians xvi. 5-9.

⁴ 1 Corinthians xvi. 3, 4.

then, must bridge over the chasm between himself and the primitive community, and reconcile the latter to his work.¹ Accordingly he had charged the Galatian Christians to set aside something from Sunday to Sunday, according to their several ability; and now he made the same request of the Corinthians, so that the collection might already be on foot when he arrived, and might yield as much as possible.²

Perhaps he had already spoken of this matter in his former letter to Corinth, and had afterwards sent Timothy and Erasmus from Ephesus to Macedonia and Achaia on the same errand. At any rate he impressed the urgency of the matter upon Titus, whom he dispatched to Corinth some time after writing his second letter (1 Corinthians), but while still at Ephesus. It appears that Titus was the bearer of a third letter, now lost, caused by further reports from the city which had given Paul the greatest pain and had hurt him personally. Accordingly he wrote a passionate letter, with many tears, in which he spoke with extreme severity of the person principally concerned, and earnestly exhorted the community. At the same time he gave notice of a change in his plans. It was now his intention to sail to Corinth direct, to pay a visit thence to Macedonia, and on his return to take ship from Corinth to Jerusalem.³

But he changed this plan also. Soon after he had sent off the third letter, the great danger of which we have already spoken came upon him at Ephesus. He barely escaped with his life, and settled for a time at Troas, where he hoped to meet Titus on his return from Corinth. But although Troas offered a splendid field for his labors in preaching the gospel, and though his efforts were actually crowned with great success, yet his growing anxiety as to the effect of his last letter to Corinth left him no peace. He repented of having adopted so severe a tone; he longed with all his heart to hear from Titus what effect it had produced; and at last he took leave of the brethren at Troas and crossed over to Macedonia, hoping to meet his friend there. But here he was even more ill at ease than he had been at Troas. He had to contend against every kind of opposition, and meanwhile his anxiety about Corinth rose still higher, till at last Titus joined him.

His arrival was a great relief and comfort, not so much because of the pleasure of his society as because of the favora-

¹ 2 Corinthians ix. 12 ff.

² 1 Corinthians xvi. 1, 2.

³ 2 Corinthians ii. 2 ff., vii. 8 ff., i. 15, 16.

ble report he had to make.¹ He had been better received than might have been expected. The letter had made a deep impression. The Corinthians, though much pained, had at least been shaken out of their slothful indifference. Their indignation with the offender or traducer, and their enthusiasm for the Apostle had been roused. They had taken vigorous steps in the matter, and were now longing for the arrival of Paul himself, with whose sufferings they heartily sympathized. At any rate a great many of the brethren showed a spirit of respectful obedience. On the other hand his delay in visiting the city had made his Jewish-Christian opponents more outrageous than ever in their violent or scoffing attacks upon his person and character. Moreover, many faults still disfigured the community. For these and other reasons Paul was impelled in the late autumn or early winter of 58 A.D. to write a fourth letter (2 Corinthians) to Corinth before going there in person. This was perhaps at Philippi. He wrote the letter in his own name and that of Timothy, who must therefore have joined him again by this time, though we hear nothing of his reception and experiences at Corinth, and do not even know whether he had really fulfilled his mission or been in Achaea at all.

This epistle is full of references to the manifold sufferings inseparable from the Apostle's work, and of expressions of the warmest affection for the Corinthians. Paul expresses his satisfaction at the result of his last letter, defends himself against the charge of vacillation in his plans, since his reason for delaying his visit had been his unwillingness to come to them with a severe rebuke in his mouth, and exhorts them to receive the guilty brother once more into their affections, since he was now sufficiently punished and tortured by repentance. He exalts the dignity of the apostolic ministry, as that of the spirit that makes alive, above the ministry of the Old Covenant, as that of the letter that kills; and describes how he pursues that ministry with purity and faithfulness, in the joyful perseverance of faith and in the hope of a glorious future, in spite of the terrible strain it puts upon his powers.

Then he speaks of the collection for the Palestinian believers. The Macedonian Christians, poor as they were, had given zealously, even beyond their means; and now he had begged Titus to bring this work of love to a satisfactory conclusion at Corinth, where he had busied himself in the matter on his former visit, and where it had been in hand for a year

¹ 2 Corinthians ii. 12, 13, vii. 2-16.

already. For that purpose he would send him thither as the bearer of the letter, together with two other brethren, whose names are not given, one of whom represented the community, while the other was a trusted assistant of the Apostle. Paul endeavors to commend the cause to the Corinthians in many ways, especially by making them feel it inconsistent with their own self-respect to be behind the others. All this he does with great tact, but also with great urgency.

The last four chapters are devoted to a sometimes passionate self-defence. There were abundant and pressing reasons for this; and there seems also to have been a very special occasion for it in the shape of a project of inviting some man of authority, perhaps one of the Twelve or one of the brothers of the Lord, to come over to Corinth.¹ A certain violence of style pervades these chapters. In the former part of the epistle Paul had already defended himself from the charge of vacillation and the suspicion of base cupidity in connection with the collection of the gifts of love; he had fallen upon his opponents, who had come with letters of commendation from Jerusalem and had asked for similar letters from the Corinthians to other churches, and had denounced them as falsifiers of God's word. He now repeats all this and defends his character and his apostolic dignity against his opponents, not without violent threats. In proof that his apostleship is in no way inferior, but rather superior to that of the vaunted Twelve and their leaders, he appeals to all that he had done and suffered in the cause of the gospel, and to the revelations of the glorified Christ, with which he had been favored above all others. From the Corinthian community especially, since he himself had founded it, he demands the recognition and support of his high apostolic rank and his absolute disinterestedness, in the face of the allegations of his adversaries. He warns the brethren against these "servants of Satan," and against all who came to give them another Jesus, another Spirit, or another gospel than he had preached and communicated to them himself. Finally, he exhorts them not to make it necessary for him to deal severely with them when he comes in person.

What the effect of this letter was we are not told. We suspect that it was satisfactory, for the treatise which Paul soon afterwards composed in Corinth breathes a spirit of peace. The Apostle was not long in following his letter from Mace-

¹ 2 Corinthians xi. 4.

Ionia to Greece. According to Acts, he only spent three months in the latter country and then set out for Jerusalem. All we know of his stay at Corinth is that it brought his plans for the future to maturity. First of all, he would go to the brethren at Jerusalem to make peace with them. This journey must often have filled him with uneasy apprehension, but he was encouraged to hope for the best by the brilliant proofs of the brotherly love of the heathen Christians, which could not fail to be acceptable to the believers at Jerusalem; by confidence in his own personal influence backed by the truth;¹ and above all by his unshaken hope in the support of his Lord. After pleading his cause at Jerusalem, and securing his churches against the turbulent agitators who would soon lose all their influence if once renounced by the Apostles, he intended to carry out a project he had long cherished with passionate earnestness and make his way to Rome. According to another account, of doubtful authenticity,² his plans included a yet wider scheme, and he intended to go on from Rome to Spain. But let us confine ourselves to what is certain.³ He was determined to visit Rome, and we may easily see why. His restless nature never ceased to urge him on into new and ever wider fields of labor. He had now traversed sea and land without cessation for full twenty years, his life was advancing, and his work still seemed to miss its crown so long as he had not visited Rome and preached the gospel there. He had always picked out great capitals, and now the capital of the world had an irresistible fascination for him. What a glorious thought, to preach the kingdom of God and attack Satan, the god of the heathen world, at the very centre of the power of heathenism! Moreover, if Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth were the scenes of busy intercourse among the different nations, whence the news of the gospel must spread far and wide, Rome was the very heart of the ancient world. The seed there scattered and matured would be borne on the breath of the winds to all the quarters of heaven, and would bear rich fruits in every land. A triumph gained at Rome would open up immeasurable prospects.

Then was the gospel of the Crucified as yet unknown at Rome? That was impossible. There was no movement of any interest or extent in any portion of the great empire which was not sooner or later reflected in the capital. Without any special founder, a band of believers had been formed

¹ 2 Corinthians xiii. 8.

³ Romans i. 10-15.

² Romans xv. 24, 28.

at Rome by the mere arrival of travelling traders or the settlement of strangers. It was probably connected with the synagogue, and had already gained a certain celebrity. But this was not enough for Paul. *His* gospel must be established there. He would go and preach in Rome himself; for the full truth, as it was in Christ, must be proclaimed there.

But the previous existence of a congregation, though on one side fortunate, inasmuch as it would give his work a point of attachment and support, was on the other side a source of great embarrassment. When he arrived, what reception must he expect? Some of the believers were Jews; and though others were converted heathen,¹ even they had no clear insight into the significance of the cross, no accurate knowledge of the way of salvation,—of justification by grace through faith.² Paul knew, or had reason to suspect, that he would meet with opponents there who had already blackened his character, and allies who misunderstood or misapplied his principles. So he felt the necessity of paving the way for his personal visit by making the Christians acquainted with his gospel, and so winning their hearts for the truth in advance, or at any rate securing a more favorable disposition towards his gospel and removing prejudices. To this we owe the epistle to the Romans,—Paul's masterpiece; the first attempt—and a supremely important one—to draw up a system of Christian doctrine. It is no controversial appeal, like the epistle to the Galatians; no personal defence, like the two remaining epistles to the Corinthians,—but a calm exposition of a doctrinal system, with its commendation to the calm consideration of others. The circumstances naturally dictated a conciliatory tone, and prominence is given to constructive rather than destructive elements, which puts this epistle into contrast more especially with that to the Galatians.

After greeting the brethren, Paul at once announces his intention of visiting Rome to preach among the heathen there also; for he felt the duty laid upon him of bringing both Greek and barbarian, both the cultured and the ignorant, to the Christ. “For in spite of contempt and persecution it is my pride to preach the gospel, since I know it to be the power of God for the preservation of all who have faith, whether Jew or Greek. It reveals to the heart of man the perfect relationship to God, springing from faith and leading to faith,

¹ Romans i. 5, 6, 13–15, xi. 13 ff.

² Romans vi. 17.

according to the saying of the Scripture, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”¹

Then he shows that the heathen world had been given up to the deepest moral corruption as a punishment for its idolatry; but that the Jews also, subject to God’s judgment and condemned by their own Law, are just as far from the righteousness that avails with God. “All mankind is guilty in His eyes. Observance of the Law cannot possibly make any man just in His sight; for the Law does but serve to bring sin into light.”

“But now,” — and here we have the brief epitome of Paul’s gospel in his own words, — “but now the true justification, sanctioned by the Scripture, is made accessible without the instrumentality of Law. It is the justification of all who have faith in Christ by means of that faith. For there is no difference between Jew and heathen. All alike have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, *but are justified without price by his grace*, by the redemption we have found in Jesus Christ. When he poured out his blood, God offered him to the believer as an atoning sacrifice for his sins. Hence it appears that God’s long-suffering has not really infringed upon his justice when in times gone by he has let sins go unpunished, with this atoning sacrifice in view. And by the same means the true justification has been brought to light; for by the cross God’s justice is established, and God holds all who have faith in Jesus to be justified.

“Then what ground is left for any self-exaltation on the part of the Jew? None whatever. What is it that has brought all this about? Is it the religion of legal observance? No, it is the religion of faith. We believe, then, that faith without legal observance brings man into the true relationship with God. Or is He the God of the Jews only, and not of the heathen? By no means. The same God will save Israel by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”

But was not this in contradiction with the Scripture? Quite the contrary; for, at the very threshold of Israel’s history, Abraham, the father of the faithful, was justified by faith even before his circumcision. And if this justification gives us peace with God and the hope of life, then two great facts stand over against each other as the main factors of the world’s history: First, sin and death to all through Adam, the carnal man; second, grace and salvation to all through

¹ Romans i. 16, 17; compare Habakkuk ii. 4.

Jesus Christ, the heavenly man. The believer, made one with the Christ, and thereby released from the slavery of sin, henceforth leads a holy life in obedience to God. For has not the death of Christ completely released him from the Law, which brings the power of sin to light? Released from all bondage, awakened to a life after the spirit, transformed into a son or daughter of God, blessed in hope, courageous in suffering, certain of his future glory, -- the believer rejoices in the presence of God's love which nothing can disturb.

But alas! the people of the covenant and the promises for the most part rejected the Christ. Such was the decree of God's omnipotence, let man say what he might to it; and it was only in appearance contradictory to the promises themselves. Israel refused to tread the path of faith. But *the obstinacy of Israel was itself the means of the salvation of the heathen world*, and thus it appeared that the Apostle of the gentiles was himself toiling, indirectly indeed but none the less zealously, for the salvation of his own countrymen; for when once the salvation of the heathen was accomplished, then the object of the temporary exclusion of the Jews would be gained, the rejection would be repealed, and all Israel would be gathered into the kingdom of Christ. Oh, the adorable wisdom of God's government!

Then follow exhortations to a life consecrated to God; to a good use of the gifts entrusted to each; to love, zeal, perseverance, sympathy, forgivingness; and especially to submission to the heathen magistracy as appointed by God, and as his handmaid, together with active love towards men, and a pure life in expectation of Christ's return that was drawing near.

Finally, there were some of the members of the Roman community who thought they might eat any thing, including meat from sacrificial beasts, and need take no heed of Sabbath, fast, or feast; and there were others so strict that they would not eat any meat at all, but only vegetables, and were extremely scrupulous in observing the Jewish fasts and feasts. Now while Paul does not for a moment conceal his agreement with the former, he pleads for the broadest toleration on both sides, and especially urges those who share his own views to treat the others who are "weak in the faith" with the utmost possible consideration, — not to parade their own enlightenment, not to behave in a manner that will seem offensive to those who differ from them, and above all never to tempt others to violate their own consciences.

With this, or with a concluding word of praise,¹ many manuscripts make the epistle to the Romans end. It would seem that not only the last chapter, — which is at any rate out of place in this epistle,² — but the last but one also is of doubtful origin. This chapter (xv.) contains a fresh exhortation to tolerance and unanimity ; a scriptural justification of the conversion of the heathen ; an address from the Apostle of the gentiles to the believers in Rome ; and an announcement of his intention of going to Jerusalem with the money he had collected, and then travelling to Spain through Rome.

It was probably in the beginning of the year 59 A.D. that some opportunity was found of sending the letter to Rome. Shortly afterward Paul left Corinth. According to Acts, it was his intention to go to Palestine by sea ; but, having heard of a plot of the Jews, apparently to surprise and kill him on his way to the port, he changed his plans and made his way by land through Macedonia. When he reached Philippi he crossed over to Troas. The passage, owing to contrary winds or the damaged condition of the vessel, occupied five days, and took place just after the Jewish Passover, according to the trustworthy statements of the anonymous companion of Paul's voyages, whose narrative is again woven into the Acts at this point. Henceforth we shall call him Titus for convenience, but without at all intending to pre-judge the question of his identity. From the date he gives in this passage we may infer with great probability that it was now ten months since Paul had left Ephesus.³

Titus was not the Apostle's only companion on this occasion. He was surrounded by seven other friends from various districts, — Sopater the son of Pyrrhus, from Berea ; Aristarchus and Secundus, from Thessalonica ; Gaius, from Derbe ; Tychicus and Trophimus, from Asia (Ephesus?) ; and finally Timothy.⁴ It can hardly be doubted that these men were deputed by the various churches of Asia Minor and Europe to accompany Paul to Jerusalem with the money that they had raised. We have already heard of this project from Paul himself. The only puzzle is why no one from Corinth is mentioned ; but perhaps the Corinthians had not been able to fix upon one of their number who was capable of making the journey, and were therefore represented by one of the

¹ Romans xvi. 25-27 (to follow immediately after xiv. 23).

² See pp. 590, 591. ³ See p. 601, and 1 Corinthians xvi. 8.

⁴ Acts xx. 4, where "into Asia" is not authentic.

other deputies or not at all. All we know is that the seven friends went on in advance and awaited Paul and Titus at Troas.

This was the last occasion upon which Paul visited his communities, — the last farewell he took of them, though he did not know that they were never to see him more. Not only was he never again to visit these regions, which he had so often crossed and recrossed in every direction, but his apostolic labors were themselves drawing to a close. In a certain sense his task had been accomplished. The contest he had waged for so many years with varying fortune against the Jewish-Christianity which had penetrated into the fields of his labor had spurred him to ever greater efforts, had compelled him to seize every weapon that lay within his reach, had forced him to penetrate yet further into the heart of his own gospel and to work out and round off his own opinions more completely ; and thereby it had indirectly contributed towards confirming and extending his apostolic influence upon his own and coming ages. This remark has special reference to his writings, — those four marvellous epistles that have been preserved for us, and which were largely called forth by the divisions in the bosom of apostolic Christianity.

His work survived. He had toiled and striven and endured more than tongue can utter ; but the results of his unwearied efforts and unreserved devotion were proportionately rich and grand. It is true that the consummation he expected, — the glorious establishment of the kingdom of God by the return of the Christ from heaven, — never came. But it was through him personally, and to the form in which he preached his gospel, that the great spiritual power, destined slowly but surely to regenerate mankind, became the property of the whole civilized world. While he, together with all the believers of his generation, still looked in vain for the glorious renewal of heaven and earth, he had himself laid the foundations of the colossal edifice of the Christian Church.

CHAPTER X.

PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

Acts XX. 7-XXIII., VIII. 9-25.

THE Apostle and his companions reached Jerusalem without hindrance. But whether the means of travelling at their command necessitated occasional delays of a few days' duration, or whether they had a little vessel of their own during the first part of the voyage and paused from time to time by choice, in any case they made no great haste on their way.

To begin with, they spent a week at Troas, where the following event occurred : On the Sunday evening before the Monday morning on which they were to depart, a final meeting of the congregation, closed by a brotherly meal, was held in a well-lighted upper room. Paul had much to say, and midnight had already come, when both he and his hearers were horrified to see a young man called Eutychus, who was sitting on the window-seat and had gone to sleep, fall down outside from the third story. As he made no sound or motion, they gave him up at once for dead and raised great lamentations. But Paul, who had hurried down with the rest, threw himself upon him, embraced him, and said : "Lament not thus for him ! He is still alive !" Then they went into the upper room again, joined in the brotherly meal, and conversed till dawn, when the Apostle went his way. Meanwhile Eutychus had been brought in alive, to the great joy of every one. This circumstance is recorded by Titus, and may therefore be accepted without hesitation ; but the writer of Acts appears to have made a slight alteration in the narrative, so as to give Paul the glory of restoring the dead to life, which he has already ascribed to Peter.¹

Paul had decided to go to Assus, twenty miles south of Troas, by land, and there to join his fellow travellers who were to go before by ship. This was done ; and from Assus they crossed to Mitylene, the capital of Lesbos, lying on the east coast of the island. There they spent the night. Next day they sailed past Chios, and the day after they steered for Samos ; anchored one night off Cape Trogylgium, and on the next day reached Miletus.

¹ See pp. 557, 561.

At this point the author of Acts interrupts the narrative of Titus to insert from some less trustworthy authority a moving account of a last farewell which Paul is supposed to have taken at Miletus of the elders of the church of Ephesus.¹ We are told that he was extremely anxious to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost, and that in order to lose no time in Asia he sent to Ephesus from Miletus and invited the elders to come and see him there, instead of going to the city himself. This is an extraordinary statement; for the week's abode at Troas, and again at Tyre, and the delay of many days at Cæsarea, within two days' journey of Jerusalem, preclude the idea of haste. And the Apostle certainly did not arrive till the feast was over. Besides, if he had really been pressed for time it would have been far better to take leave of the Ephesians at the neighboring Trogylium than at Miletus, which was a long day's journey from Ephesus, so that the communications would have caused an additional delay of at least two days. Finally, we know that Paul had altogether given up celebrating Jewish feasts. — But to go on with the story: When the representatives of the chief church of Asia had joined him, Paul gave them a retrospect of his apostolic labors at Ephesus. He reminded them of his style of life among them during three successive years, of his zeal and fidelity, his patient perseverance, the truth and completeness of his preaching. And now he was journeying to Jerusalem in obedience to an impulse from above, warned by the prophets, from city to city as he went, of the dangers that awaited him there, but prepared to sacrifice every thing, down to his very life, in accomplishing his task. And since he knew that he should never more see the Ephesians or any of the congregations he had founded, he now declared in their presence that his own conscience was clear, and conjured the overseers, as set by the Holy Spirit in the post of responsibility, to guard the Church of the Lord against heretical teachers who should burst in like savage wolves from outside, or should rise up in their own midst. Finally, he commended them to God, and exhorted them to follow his own example of complete disinterestedness (in supporting himself while preaching), according to the word of Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." After this they all knelt down and Paul prayed with them. Deeply grieved by his assurance that they would see his face no more, they escorted him to the ship and bade him farewell.

¹ Acts xx. 16-38; compare p. 562.

There can be no real doubt that this profoundly touching and beautiful address was composed at a later date in defence or in honor of Paul, and not really delivered by him.¹ He himself by no means looked for certain captivity and death when on his way to Jerusalem, but on the contrary was full of vast projects for the future.² He knew that he was exposing himself to serious danger, but to that he had long been accustomed. The prediction here put into his mouth is framed in accordance with the result, but in contradiction to his own anticipations³ at the time. We must pass the same judgment on the warning against future heretics. Of course Paul himself never thought of such teachers, and would have warned the Ephesians against the orthodox fanatics if against any one. Moreover we know that the three years of his abode in Asia had not been by any means spent continuously at Ephesus; nor did he ever recommend others to follow his own personal rule of earning their bread by manual labor when preaching the gospel.⁴ Finally, not to enter upon further details, the high estimate of the office of overseers or bishops indicates the post-apostolic age.

We now return to the narrative of Titus. Quitting Miletus, the party made straight for the island of Cos, sailed or rowed thence to Rhodes, and on the third day reached the Lycian harbor of Patara. Here they found a merchantman just ready to sail for Phoenicia, and took their passage in her. The vessel soon put out to sea towards Cyprus, which she passed on the left, and after a voyage of a short week reached Tyre, where she was to unload. Here the travellers sought the brethren, with whom they spent seven days, and who — after vainly attempting, in obedience to an inspired impulse, to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem, adds the author of Acts — escorted them out of the city with the women and children, prayed with them, and took leave of them on the strand; for our travellers avoided the route by land, which would have brought them into contact with the orthodox communities, and sailed from Tyre to Ptolemais, where they visited the brethren and spent one day with them. On the morrow they crossed Mount Carmel and passed through the flowery plain of Sharon to Cæsarea. Here they took up their abode with Philip the Evangelist, one of the Seven,⁵

¹ See pp. 540, 562, 569, 570.

² See pp. 604, 605.

³ Compare Philippians ii. 24; Philemon verse 22.

⁴ See Galatians vi. 6; 1 Corinthians ix. 6-15.

⁵ See pp. 5, 14 ff.

who had four unmarried daughters, all of them prophetesses or inspired speakers. Here they spent several days.

At Cæsarea, we read, Paul received a final warning. The Judæan prophet Agabus came to him, took his girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it, and foretold in the name of the Holy Spirit that the owner of that girdle would be bound by the Jews in like manner and delivered to the Romans. Then his travelling companions and the Christians of Cæsarea implored Paul to desist from his project; but he bade them cease, and declared that he was ready to brave not only imprisonment but death itself at Jerusalem for his faith. Upon this they acquiesced in the Lord's will. We suspect that this scene formed no part of the original diary of Titus, but was subsequently inserted; for it is in perfect harmony with the other unhistorical interpolations, and is in itself exceedingly improbable. Besides, we know that this idea of Paul's feeling impelled from above to visit Jerusalem at every risk is nothing whatever but an invention by the author of Acts or his authority, who is determined to surround the brow of his hero with a crown of glory; whereas the Apostle himself was not at all conscious of any such irresistible impulse, and knew the value of his own life as well as ever.¹ In conclusion we may observe that a former appearance of Agabus is equally open to suspicion,² that the careful enumeration of the days that characterizes the itinerary throughout disappears in this passage, and that other indications likewise point it out as an interpolation. We have therefore no right to assume that Paul approached Jerusalem as a voluntary martyr to the Jews, rather than an ambassador of peace to the Jewish-Christians.

After spending a good many days in Cæsarea then, the Apostle and his eight companions prepared to continue the journey. It was now a few weeks after Pentecost. Some of the Cæsarean brothers accompanied them, and when they reached Jerusalem brought them to a certain Mnason, a Cyprian convert of long standing, who offered them hospitality. They were doubtless deterred by the want of a hearty mutual understanding from taking up their abode with any of the Apostles or brothers of Jesus; and if Paul had near relatives in the city, as we shall presently see he had, it was perhaps a seasonable precaution to avoid going to the place where he would first be looked for. Be this as it may, their reception at Mnason's house was hearty, but quiet. The community

¹ See 1 Corinthians xvi. 4; and pp. 602, 605.

² See p. 535.

probably did not know of their arrival, for they had intentionally avoided announcing it, and it was certainly advisable to keep it carefully secret from the Jews.¹ To James, on the other hand, they announced their arrival at once; so that on the very next morning, when they presented themselves to hand over the gifts of love, they found all the elders or representatives of the community assembled to receive them.

What reception did the Apostle of the gentiles and the gentle deputies themselves meet at the hands of this assembly, and what was the course that events took in consequence? Alas! the trustworthy account of Titus is lost; for the author of Acts, who had certainly reason enough for suppressing it, substituted for it the following story, of suspicious origin and more than doubtful credibility:—

After a friendly greeting, Paul began, and gave a full account of all that God had done among the heathen by his instrumentality. The others listened with sympathetic interest, and glorified God, but did not conceal the fact that the very numerous communities of believing Jews, who were all zealous for the Law, cherished a strong though mistaken prejudice against Paul which might well prove dangerous to him. Slanderous reports had been spread to the effect that he made the Jews in the dispersion apostates by teaching them that circumcision and the other duties prescribed by the Jewish religion were no longer binding. He had better avail himself of the present opportunity of clearing himself from such imputations by a public act of adhesion to the Law and tradition; for his presence in Jerusalem would soon be generally known. Now it happened that there were four brethren who had taken the Nazarite vow, and were too poor to make the sacrifices prescribed for its close. It was, therefore, impossible for them to be released from it without help.² What if Paul were to make common cause with them, were to take the vow himself for the last few days, and were finally to bear the whole cost of the sacrifices? Such a good deed would be the palpable proof that all these reports were simply slanders, and that his scrupulosity left nothing to be desired. Finally, they reminded him that with regard to heathen converts the old agreement still held good, and nothing was required of them but abstinence from the four abominations.³ Paul unhesitatingly acceded. He joined the four needy Naza-

¹ Acts xxi. 22.

² See p. 554.

² Compare vol. ii. p. 514.

rites, accepted all the obligations of the vow, went with them the following day to the temple and informed the priest that the days of separation and abstinence would soon be at an end, when the offerings prescribed in the Law would be duly made ; namely, a lamb, a ewe, a ram, a basket of unleavened bread and cakes, together with a meat and drink offering, for each man.

This story is certainly untrue. It is more than improbable that Paul would have submitted to a Nazarite's vow with all its frivolous prescriptions ; it is utterly impossible that he would have consented to so hypocritical an artifice as to take public part in the ceremony for the express purpose of making every one believe that he was a strict observer of the Law, and therefore could not preach its abolition.¹ Nor could James and the elders have addressed him in any such strain, or made any such proposal as this ; for they well knew what his preaching was. And, finally, the resolution and the letter here referred to are themselves spurious.² The only touch of history in this story is the indication, which escapes the writer in spite of himself, of the existence of three distinct parties. There was the small circle of friends, converted heathen or Greek-speaking Jewish believers, by whom Paul and his companions were warmly and hospitably received. There were James and the representatives of the community, whom the travellers visited the day after their arrival in order to enter into negotiations with them. Finally, there were the numerous Nazarenes, all of them zealous for the Law, who were not yet aware that Paul had arrived, but who would soon know it, and who hated him as an apostate that had led others astray. We may also readily believe that this last party were even more indignant with Paul for declaring that the Law was no longer binding on the Jewish believers than for admitting the gentiles into the Messianic kingdom. In all the other details we have no difficulty in recognizing the usual style and method of the author of Acts. He is so anxious to restore peace to the Church and reconcile the orthodox to the memory of the Apostle of the gentiles, that he utterly obscures his teaching. Nay, he makes him — the writer of the epistles to the Galatians and Romans ! — a strict Jewish-Christian, who circumcises Timothy, takes more than one vow, makes repeated journeys to the City of the Temple in order to celebrate Jewish feasts, offers sacrifices, and pres-

¹ See Galatians ii. 16 ; Romans vii. 1 ff., x. 4.

² See p. 556.

ently gives himself out as a Pharisee and claims the Pharisees' protection!¹

We may be very sure that the account of Titus gave a widely different version of Paul's reception by the heads of the community. The very fact that the author of Acts drops the narrative here and substitutes his own fictitious conceptions, which disguise the whole course of the history, gives us reason to suspect the worst. We must also observe that our author tries to bury the whole cause of Paul's journey,—namely, the collection,—in silent oblivion; and yet he knew about it, for he mentions it once incidentally,² though he makes it a proof of Paul's national zeal instead of a peace-offering from the gentiles to the Jewish-Christians, as it really was. When he speaks of the collection more expressly, he is careful to put it many years earlier, before any collision had taken place.³ Here he represents the gentile-Christian deputies as simple travelling companions of Paul, and makes the Apostle himself come up to Jerusalem with no other purpose than to offer sacrifices and celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Now for all this he had a remarkably good reason; for we still possess a story which showed very clearly in its original form that Paul's expectation was completely disappointed, and that his love-offering produced a most disastrous impression. The writer of Acts has endeavored to disarm this story by adopting it in a modified form and assigning it a place in his narrative before the conversion of Paul, on the first mention of the preaching in Samaria.⁴ No one could then suspect that it had any reference to the Apostle of the gentiles. It runs as follows:—

Before Philip arrived in the Samaritan city, a certain magician called Simon had established himself there. He gave himself out as something wonderful,—as the Great Power of the Deity; and had long held the multitudes in awe and secured their adhesion by his magic arts. But now they all accepted the gospel; and even Simon himself became a follower of Jesus, received baptism, and attached himself to Philip, whose miraculous deeds he beheld with amazement. Now when the Apostles at Jerusalem heard of the conversion of the Samaritans they sent Peter and John to them, who prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit, and afterwards imparted it to them by laying their hands upon them. Simon witnessed this, was seized with a desire to share their

¹ See pp. 540, 555, 556, 578, 620, 622, and chap. xi. p. 624.

² Acts xxiv. 17.

³ See pp. 535, 555, 601, 605.

⁴ See p. 506

privilege, and offered to give the Apostles a sum of money if they would give him the power of communicating the Spirit to those on whom he laid his hands. But Peter rejected the proposal with horror, and launched a scathing rebuke against Simon : “ Let him and his money perish together ! Did he think the gift of God could be bought ? How base the means he took to his end ; how corrupt his heart ; how sunk in iniquity his life ! ” Hereupon Simon, in terror of God’s judgments, besought their intercession.

This story forms the centre round which a number of fabulous representations have been grouped in the old literature of heresy. To understand its meaning we must note the following points : First, that elsewhere in Jewish-Christian controversial writings Paul is very distinctly indicated as the foil of Peter, or Simon “ the rock,” under the nickname of Simon “ the magician,” which originally belonged to quite another man. Second, that “ the baptism of the Holy Spirit,” generally manifested in the “ speaking with tongues ” and other such phenomena, was regarded as the test of admission to the Messianic salvation ;¹ so that the question here at issue is that of official reception into the future kingdom of Christ. Finally, that the privilege of being able to communicate this Spirit, which is here attributed to the Apostles in distinction from the evangelist, is elsewhere expressly ascribed by our author to the Apostle of the gentiles likewise, in accordance with his usual desire to establish equality and harmony between Paul and the Twelve ;² so that, in this passage, we may regard the power of giving the Spirit as representing the apostolic dignity in its completeness. Bearing all this in mind, we see that this story was originally aimed at no other than Paul himself, who claimed the same exalted rank, the same apostolic dignity and privileges, as those accorded to the Twelve.³ His zeal in collecting a generous love-offering, in the hope of reconciling the “ pillars ” to his work, and inducing them to recognize his converts as citizens of the kingdom of God, — to recognize his gospel, his work, his mission, in a word, his apostleship,⁴ — is here placed in the most odious light, as an attempt to buy the full powers of an Apostle for gold ! And the rebuke administered on this occasion by Peter perhaps served in the minds of his orthodox admirers

¹ See pp. 476, 486, 589.

² See p. 589.

³ 2 Corinthians xi. 4, 5, xii. 11; 1 Corinthians ix. 1 ff.; see pp. 604, 596.

⁴ See p. 589.

to balance the never forgotten or forgiven attack of Paul upon him at Antioch.¹

From all this we may safely infer that Paul's whole project was completely wrecked. He was rebuffed everywhere; and when the Jewish mob fell upon him he was left completely to his fate by the Jewish-Christians. Nay, who knows but what he was pointed out and surrendered to the fury of the populace by the "false brethren" who were acquainted with him? But let us listen to the account of the upshot given in the Acts. We have no means whatever of checking it, and shall therefore simply give it as it stands, with as little interruption as possible; only premising that the incredible story of the vow which introduces it, and the improbable character of many of its details, inspire us with well-founded doubts as to its truth.

The period of the vow had not yet quite expired, and Paul had been a Nazarite for some few days, when ill-luck would have it that certain Jews from Asia (Ephesus), who were just then at Jerusalem, found their old enemy, whom they had resisted so furiously throughout his long abode in their native land, in the temple.² To see such a man in such a place filled them with rage and made them fear the worst. A little while before they had seen him walking about in the city with his friend Trophimus, of Ephesus; and as soon as they caught sight of him in the sacred place they took for granted that he had brought this uncircumcised companion with him into the court of the Israelites, which no heathen might enter on pain of death. He was quite capable of such sacrilege! So, without inquiring whether it really was so, they rushed upon him, and inflamed the people by shouting, "Israelites to the rescue! This is the man who preaches everywhere to all the world against our people, our Law, and our temple; and now he is bringing Greeks into the sanctuary and polluting the house of the Lord!"

Then the whole city was in a commotion, and a great tumult arose. Paul was dragged out of the temple, and the Levites shut the gate after him for fear his blood should pollute the holy place.³ The mob would certainly have made an end of Paul on the spot had not an unexpected rescue saved him. Claudius Lysias, the captain of the garrison in the castle of Antonia that commanded the temple from the north-west, was informed that all Jerusalem was in a turmoil; and he instantly

¹ See pp. 552, 553. ² Acts xx. 19; 1 Corinthians xvi. 9. ³ 2 Kings xi. 15.

rushed down upon the mob with the soldiers and officers that were about him. It occurred to him that this tumult might be connected with a former disturbance ; for not long before a certain fanatic had appeared in the character of a prophet, had secured a certain following especially among the zealots, and had led them from the wilderness of Judah to the Mount of Olives, promising that the walls of Jerusalem should fall down before their eyes as those of Jericho had done in ancient time, whereupon he would release the city from its heathen oppressors, and proclaim the Messianic kingdom. The governor, Felix, had dispersed his followers, after cutting down or capturing several hundred of them ; but the chief culprit had escaped. Lysias thought he had perhaps come back again and was making this disturbance. In any case he must put a stop to the tumult.

When the Jews were aware of the captain's presence, they drew back for a moment and gave up striking Paul ; upon which Lysias instantly seized him, threw him into fetters and manacles, and inquired who he was and what he had done. But the tumult was far too great for him to hope for an intelligible answer. One shouted one thing, and another another, till Lysias commanded the prisoner to be conveyed to the barracks in Antonia. Meanwhile the mob pressed forward so furiously, shouting "Away with him!" that when they reached the steps of the castle the soldiers had literally to carry Paul. When he was inside the ramparts and was being conveyed to his prison, he said to the captain, "Can I have a word with you?" "So!" replied the other, "do you understand Greek? I thought you were the Egyptian Jew who made such a disturbance a short time back, and collected those four thousand bandits in the wilderness!" Upon this Paul declared himself a Jewish citizen of Tarsus, and begged to be allowed to address the people. His request was granted. He took his place at the top of the steps, demanded silence by a gesture, and when he had secured it addressed the people and their leaders in the language of the place, as follows : "Brothers and fathers! Listen to my defence." Now, when they heard that he was speaking in Hebrew they were more quiet yet ; and he began to tell them of his descent, of his bringing up at Jerusalem, of his rigidly Jewish education under Gamaliel, of his zeal for the religion of the fathers, and the details of his persecution of the Nazarenes. It was only the irresistible force of the appearance of Jesus near Damascus (here described in vivid colors) that had brought him to

himself; and it was Ananias, a man whose piety according to the Law had earned him the esteem of all his Jewish fellow-citizens, who had told him to what he was called and had baptized him. Finally, when he had returned to Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to him in the temple and commanded him, in direct contradiction with his personal wishes, plans, and expectations, to quit the holy city, where he would not be accepted, and go far away to the gentiles.

The author has been very careful, in framing this address to the people, to make Paul lay stress on every point which could please the Jews, such as the way in which he had spent his early life, his zeal for the Law, and especially the person of Ananias.¹ Accordingly he tells us that the people listened attentively so far; but as soon as they heard the word "gentiles" their passion burst out again as fiercely as ever, and they shrieked: "Away with him! He shall not live!" and in their impotent fury tore their garments and flung dust into the air. Then the captain, who did not understand the language of the country, and therefore had not the least idea what it was all about, put an end to the scene by ordering Paul to be taken in and forced to a confession by scourging, in order that he might get at the cause of the people's fury. Paul was already bound to the stake and the executioners ready to scourge him, when he asked the officer in charge whether he had the right to scourge a Roman citizen, and one who had not been condemned. The officer went at once to the captain and told him what Paul had said, so that he might know what he was doing. Then the captain came himself and asked Paul whether he really was a Roman. "Yes," he replied. "I bought the citizenship myself for a great sum," said the captain. "But I was born to it," answered Paul. Of course the orders to scourge him were at once countermanded, and indeed the captain was under some uneasiness already, because he had thrown a Roman citizen into chains without giving him a hearing.

The next day, in order to learn with certainty what it was that the Jews laid to the charge of Paul, he had the Sanhedrim called, and brought Paul before them without chains. The Apostle gazed steadfastly at the assembly and said: "Men and brothers! I have walked before God with a clear conscience all my life." For these words the high priest, Ananias, son of Zebedeus, ordered the attendants to strike him on the mouth. That was too much for Paul's patience.

¹ See pp. 523, 533.

"Strike me! God will strike you, you whited wall [hypocrite]," he burst out. "Are you sitting there to give sentence according to the Law, and do you dare to order them to strike me in violation of the Law?" "How dare you revile God's high priest?" cried the bystanders. Upon which Paul, unconditionally submissive to the Law as usual, replied: "Brothers! had I known that he was the high priest I would never have transgressed the precept, 'Thou shalt not curse a leader of thy people.'" Then, knowing that one half of the council consisted of Sadducees and the other half of Pharisees, he cried aloud: "Men and brothers! I am a Pharisee, as my fathers were before me. It is concerning the Messianic hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am now upon my trial!" These words caused an instant division between the two parties¹ and a great turmoil. Some of the Scribes rose up and asserted vehemently: "We can find no harm in the man. And what if a spirit or an angel really did speak to him at Damascus?" The contest grew so violent that the captain began to be afraid they would tear Paul to pieces, and ordered the soldiers down to take him away to the castle.—This scene before the council is again entirely incredible. The self-righteous assertion with which Paul begins conflicts in more than one respect with his real sentiments. Besides, he could not have helped knowing that the president was the high priest, or at any rate some person in authority; and in any case the style of excuse put into his mouth is by no means such as he would really have adopted. Above all, he adroitly throws the apple of discord into the assembly by making an assertion which is true enough of the Paul of the Acts, but would have been a gross untruth, and therefore utterly impossible, on the lips of the historical Paul. Finally, the Pharisees were by no means so easy to take in as this story would make it seem, and the whole affair is improbability itself. The description is simply intended to make out that Paul's innocence was manifested even before the supreme Jewish court, and that the Pharisees themselves took his part, as Gamaliel had once done for Peter and the rest.² Afterwards the whole Sanhedrim is represented as hostile to him, which it really was. In a word, the author of the Acts has given us another of his fictions for the sake of displaying his Apostle as an unimpeachable Jew of the strictest school.

The next night, he continues, Paul saw the Lord stand by

¹ Compare pp. 378, 5, 6.

² See pp. 497, 498.

him, and say, “Be of good cheer! As you have preached me at Jerusalem, so must you preach me at Rome also.” But to all appearance the dangers still grew. The day after Paul’s audience with the Sanhedrim, more than forty Jews bound themselves under a fearful oath neither to eat nor drink before they had slain him. They told the senators of their oath, and begged them to make an official request to the captain that Paul might be brought before the assembly again, in order that they might go into the affair more narrowly. While he was on his way to the hall the conspirators would kill him.

By good luck however the son of Paul’s sister heard of the murderous project, went to his uncle at the castle and revealed the plot to him. Thereupon Paul sent one of the officers to introduce his nephew to the captain, in his name, as the bearer of important news. The captain received him well, stepped aside with him, and asked him what it was. In reply the young man told him of the request the Sanhedrim would make in the morning, and of the plot it was meant to cover; upon which the captain dismissed him with strict injunctions not to tell a soul of the information he had lodged with him. Then he called two centurions and told them to get ready two hundred heavy and two hundred light armed soldiers and seventy horsemen, besides the needful beasts of burden, to set out for Cæsarea at nine o’clock in the evening, and convey Paul in safety to the governor, to whom meanwhile he himself prepared the following dispatch:—

“Claudius Lysias to the great Governor Felix. Greeting! This man was seized by the Jews and almost killed; but, understanding him to be a Roman, I hastened to the spot with the soldiers and rescued him. And, desiring to know of what they accused him, I brought him before their council, and found that the accusation referred to some question of their Law, but involved nothing punishable by death or imprisonment. On hearing that an attack upon his person was contemplated, I have sent him without delay to you, at the same time instructing his accusers to urge their complaints against him before you.”

The tribune’s orders were strictly fulfilled. The infantry escorted Paul by night to Antipatris, about eleven leagues north-west of Jerusalem, beyond all danger of an attack from the Jews. Thence they returned on the following day to Antonia, leaving the cavalry the task of escorting the prisoner further. The troop arrived at Cæsarea, seven leagues further north, and Paul rode as a prisoner under armed escort

into the very city which he had left a few days before as a free man, surrounded by friends.

The officer in charge gave Lysias's dispatch to the governor, and ushered Paul into his presence. Felix read the letter, asked from what province the prisoner came, was informed that it was Cilicia, announced his intention of examining him as soon as his accusers arrived, and put him in safe custody in the former palace of Herod the Great, which was now his own residence.



CHAPTER XI.

PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH.

ACTS XXIV.-XXVIII.; PHILEMON; PHILIPPIANS.

WE are still without the authority of Titus, the eye-witness, whom we do not meet again till we come to Paul's departure for Rome. Meanwhile we have no guide but the writer of Acts, who lived much later, and modified or invented his history to suit the object he had in view. In the portion of his book that begins with Paul's arrival at Jerusalem and ends with his departure for Rome, his purpose is to make out that in every court, whether Jewish or heathen, and upon every occasion whatever, Paul was admitted and declared, by friend and foe alike, to be innocent of all the charges brought against him by his enemies;¹ and further that the Roman authorities were very favorably disposed towards him, and constantly shielded him against the unmerited hatred and the treacherous violence of the Jews.

All this he describes at length, but omits every thing else, and passes over a period of two years in all but absolute silence.² The speeches he puts into the mouth of Paul, though modified according to the demands of the moment and the nature of the audience, are always intended to prove his scrupulous orthodoxy, and assure us that when seized he was in the very act of performing a meritorious religious rite. On the other hand, we are left in the dark as to the most essential feature of the trial, for we are never really told who Paul's accusers were or of what they accused him.

When we further bear in mind that the discourses, conver-

¹ See pp. 615-617, 620.

² Acts xxiv. 26, 27.

sations, and dispatches which fill so large a portion of these chapters are all composed by the writer himself, and that the narratives in which they are set are by no means free from improbabilities, we shall feel that very little is left as history. Indeed, we can accept nothing with confidence except the bare facts that Paul became involved with the Jewish and Roman authorities, and was made a prisoner at Jerusalem, was held two years in captivity at Cæsarea, and then, after a disastrous voyage, at least two years in Rome. Even these facts we should not always feel at liberty to accept were it not that they contradict rather than support the special intention of the author, and therefore cannot have been invented by him. They doubtless formed the kernel of the universally accepted tradition concerning Paul, whose name, for good or ill, was in everybody's mouth. Moreover they are supported by the testimony of the eye-witness, for he tells us of Paul's arrival at Jerusalem and his departure as a prisoner for Rome. Uncertain as all the details are, we have nothing to add to or substitute for them, except of course in the case of the Roman magistrates mentioned, for they are known to history. We shall therefore give the narrative as it stands in Acts, with the reservations already made.

Felix, who had now been governor of Palestine for seven years, has a black mark set to his name in history. A freed man and favorite of the Emperor Claudius, he "wielded the authority of a prince with the soul of a slave," addicting himself to every conceivable cruelty and excess. His third wife, a queen like the other two, was the fair Drusilla, sister of Agrippa II., who had deserted her husband, the king of Emesa, at the instance of Felix. Such was the judge who had now to decide Paul's fate.

The Apostle was not deserted at Cæsarea by his fellow-deputies and other friends. No sooner had they heard where he had been taken than they hastened after him.¹ But neither did his enemies lose sight of him. Within five days all was ready for the trial. A deputation from the Sanhedrim, headed by the high priest, appeared against Paul before the judgment seat, and their case was conducted by a certain Tertullus, whom they had brought as their orator or counsel. This man endeavored to win the procurator's favor by covering him with false adulation, and then (to cut a long tale short, as he said) denounced Paul as a pestilent

¹ Acts xxiv. 23.

fellow who raised tumults among the Jews all over the world ; a ringleader of the sect of Nazarenes, who had recently gone the length of actually desecrating the temple ; and who could not deny a single one of the charges they brought against him.

The members of the Sanhedrim likewise vented their hatred against Paul and confirmed all that Tertullus had said. Then Felix gave Paul leave to speak ; and he began, in courteous but dignified language, to explain that it was only twelve days since he had entered the holy city to worship, and that he had delivered no address in the temple, or made any tumult in the synagogue or in the city. In a word, the whole accusation was a forgery. He freely confessed to being a Nazarene. But what did that mean ? Not a sectary, as they libellously asserted, but one who served the God of the fathers, firmly believing all that was written in the Law and the Prophets, and hoping in God as they themselves did that there would be a resurrection of the dead to blessedness and to misery. And because of this hope he always strove to keep his conscience free from offences against God or man. Now what were the real facts ? After an absence of many years he had come to bring gifts of love to his people and offerings to God. This brought him into the temple, in compliance with all the Levitical precepts, but without any such tumultuous concourse as they asserted ; and there certain Asiatic Jews encountered him, whose conspicuous absence on the present occasion showed that they had not really any charge to bring against him. Nor could his present accusers charge him with any offence when before the council, except that he had cried out, “ It is for my hope of the resurrection that I am being tried ! ”

Felix was now abreast of the question, but he deferred giving any decision under pretext of awaiting the arrival of Lysias, the chief witness ; meanwhile he gave orders that Paul's confinement should be made as easy as possible, and that his friends should be allowed to perform any services for him that they could. A short time afterward the procurator summoned Paul to come before himself and his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, and who would therefore understand the matter. He listened to his exposition of the faith in Christ, but when he spoke of justice, temperance, and the judgment to come, the tyrant and adulterer trembled, and exclaimed : “ That is enough for to-day ! I will send for you again when I have leisure.” At the same time he hoped that his prisoner

night be ransomed, and therefore sent for him and conversed with him frequently. This went on for two years, and then Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and left Paul in prison to please the Jews.

Now Festus was a very different man from his predecessor, and ruled with justice and moderation; but the previous course of the trial was repeated with little change under him also. Within three days of his arrival and installation as procurator he departed for the capital of Judæa, where the members of the Sanhedrim laid their charges against Paul before him, and begged him as a favor to send the prisoner up to Jerusalem, with the treacherous design of murdering him upon the way. But Festus refused. He was himself going to Cæsarea in a few days, he said, and since the prisoner was in keeping there the Jewish authorities must go there too, and if they had any charges to make must make them there.

This they did. After a stay of only eight or ten days the procurator returned to Cæsarea, and the very morning after his arrival the trial took place. Paul was brought in, and the Jews of Jerusalem appeared against him, and made a number of heavy charges against him, none of which they could substantiate. The Apostle, on his side, declared that he had committed no offence against the law of the Jews, against the temple, or against the Emperor. Festus, in order to gratify the Jews, now asked: "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and receive my sentence there?" But Paul, perceiving the full danger of such a proposal, rejected it decisively. He was now standing before an Imperial Roman court, and insisted on his right of refusing to appear before any other. Besides, he had committed no offence against the Jews, as the procurator well knew, and they had therefore no claim upon him whatever. "If I am a malefactor, guilty of any capital offence, I have nothing to urge against the sentence of death. But since there is not a word of truth in their accusations, no one has power to surrender me to them. I appeal to Caesar!" A Roman citizen, resident in a province, had the right of appeal to the imperial court at Rome if he thought he had been arbitrarily treated, misused, or unlawfully sentenced by the provincial authorities. So this unexpected appeal put an instant close to the proceedings, much to the dismay of the accusers. The court rose for a moment, and Festus deliberated with his assessors, according to rule, as to the validity of the appeal. There was

nothing in the nature of the accusation or the conditions of Paul's citizenship to invalidate it; and when the court resumed, the procurator gave his decision thus: " You have appealed to Cæsar. You shall go to him."

A few days afterwards Herod Agrippa II., king of certain districts north and north-east of Galilee, who was also governor of the Temple at Jerusalem, and had the high priesthood in his gift, arrived at Cæsarea with his sister Bernice, the widow of the late King Herod of Chalcis, who was staying with him. They came to pay their court to Festus, and remained with him some time. Festus took occasion to mention the case of Paul to the Jewish king, as to one who was admirably fitted to judge of it. He told him how this prisoner had been left by his predecessor, how the council at Jerusalem had demanded his condemnation, and how he had informed them that the Romans were not in the habit of surrendering a man to punishment before he had had the opportunity of meeting his accusers and defending himself. He had lost no time in looking into the matter, and had discovered that it was not a question of any political or civil offence, but of certain points of Jewish controversy, and especially of Paul's assertion that a certain Jesus who had died long ago was still alive. At a loss how to deal with the matter, he had asked the prisoner whether he would have his case investigated at Jerusalem, but he had answered by appealing to the supreme court, and was now being held, according to his wish, in readiness to be sent to the Emperor on the first opportunity. Agrippa answered courteously that he should be glad to hear this man himself. " To-morrow morning, then," replied Festus.

On the following day the audience hall presented an imposing spectacle. On the seat of honor sat the noble and exalted Roman. Beside him were his royal guests in all their pomp and splendor, as well as the military officers and the distinguished men of Cæsarea. Festus ordered Paul into his presence, and when he arrived began the proceedings as follows :

" Be it known to King Agrippa and to all here present that this is the man whom the whole body of Jews, both here and at Jerusalem, have denounced to me with the utmost violence as unworthy to live. But I could not discover the smallest ground for a sentence of death, and have determined to accept his appeal to the Emperor. Meanwhile I cannot put the indictment against him into any intelligible form for the Emperor's information, and that is why I have called him before this assembly, and especially before you, King Agrippa, in

order that when you have heard him you may be able to advise me what to write. For it seems monstrous to send a prisoner to Rome without saying what he is accused of."

Then Agrippa turned to the prisoner and said: " You are permitted to speak."

Paul extended his hand impressively and began. He esteemed himself fortunate in being allowed to answer the accusations brought against him in the presence of King Agrippa, who was well acquainted with all the duties and all the controversies of the Jewish religion, and whose kind attention he now besought. All the Jews knew what his life had been from his youth up, and how he had lived as a Pharisee of the strictest religious school; and even now the sole charge against him was his hope in the Messianic kingdom, promised by God to the fathers, and expected with devoutest zeal by all the nation. And what was the ground of the charge? Could any thing be judged incredible now that God had raised one from the dead?¹ He, Paul, had himself been a violent persecutor of the followers of Jesus — as he proceeded to show in detail — until the risen one appeared to him in glory near Damascus, addressed many words to him, and sent him out as his chosen witness before Jew and gentile. In obedience to his behest he had preached repentance at Damascus, at Jerusalem, throughout Judæa, and to the heathen also; and that was why the Jews had seized him in the temple and attempted to destroy him. But by God's help he was still preaching to small and great, never going beyond what Moses and the prophets had predicted concerning the calling of the Christ, who must first suffer and then, as the first-fruits of the resurrection, cause truth and righteousness to be proclaimed to the people of God and to the heathen.

At this point the discourse is broken short, as we shall presently see. The author has entirely omitted all reference to the real accusation ; and on this occasion, in going over the history of Paul's previous life, of his conversion, and his subsequent labors, he throws his mission to the gentiles quite into the background, puts his Jewish orthodoxy prominently forward, and brings his apostolic career into the closest connection with the Jewish beliefs in the resurrection and the Messiah. All this is in order to show how undeserved and unreasonable were the hatred and persecution of the Jews. We are informed accordingly that the impression made upon the Jewish king was eminently favorable ; but when the heathen Festus

¹ After an amended version of Acts xxvi. 8; compare pp. 527, 528.

heard Paul speak once more of the resurrection,¹ he cried aloud: "Paul, you are raving! Your great learning has made you mad." "No, great Festus!" said the Apostle with quiet dignity, "I am not raving, but am uttering words of truth and reason. The king understands all these matters thoroughly, and I can therefore speak to him freely; for I am confident that none of these things are unknown to him, for the suffering and resurrection of the Christ took place in no remote corner of the earth. King Agrippa! do you believe the prophets? I know you do." "You would find it no hard task to make me a Christian myself," said the king in answer to his appeal. "Would to God," exclaimed Paul, "that whether I found it hard or easy, not only you but all who are here present might be brought to the state that I am in, — except for these chains!"

Then the king, the procurator, Bernice, and all the grandees rose from their seats and withdrew. There was but one opinion: "This man has done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." In fact Agrippa said to Festus: "If he had not appealed to the Emperor he might have been set at liberty."

The Apostle's innocence was fully recognized by competent judges, and could never again be attacked or questioned.

When the journey to Italy was decided on, in the autumn of 61 A.D., Paul and several other prisoners were handed over to a certain Julius, a centurion of the imperial cohort. The Apostle was again accompanied by two of his eight former companions, — namely, Aristarchus of Thessalonica and the author of the diary upon whose narrative we now come once more. It is probably introduced in this place by the author of Acts because of the great interest he attaches to Paul's journey to the capital of the world.²

There did not happen to be a ship bound for Rome at Cæsarea, so they embarked on a merchantman which was going to touch at several Asiatic ports on her way to Adramytium, in Mysia. In one place or another they would be sure to find means of transport to Italy. On the second day they reached Sidon [and Julius, who treated Paul with great courtesy, allowed him to visit his friends and enjoy their hospitable care]. Loosing from Sidon they were hindered by adverse winds from making the coast of Lycia direct, and therefore sailed round between Cyprus and the mainland,

¹ Compare pp. 569, 570.

² See pp. 562, 563.

through the Cilician sea and the Pamphylian gulf, to the seaport Myra. Here the centurion found an Alexandrian ship on the point of sailing for Italy, and embarked his passengers on her. Altogether there were two hundred and seventy-six persons on board.

They made such little way that after many days they had barely come over against the Carian peninsula Cnidus. Here the wind compelled them to bear down upon Crete by Cape Salmone, which they had difficulty in rounding, after which they reached the bay of Fair Havens on the southern coast of the island, near the city of Lasea. They had already been long on the voyage and the season was advanced; for the great day of atonement¹ was already past, so that it must have been about the first of October. Paul's experience led him to anticipate danger, and he said: "My friends, I see that if we make this voyage it will be with great loss, not only to the ship and cargo, but to our own lives." In vain. The centurion paid more attention to the helmsman and the captain than to Paul; and since the haven they were now in offered no sufficient accommodation for the winter, the general feeling was in favor of attempting to reach the city of Phœnix, the harbor of which opened westward. A gentle wind from the south assured them that they would accomplish their purpose; so they loosed anchor, but hugged the shore of Crete.

Soon afterwards a furious wind from the north-east bore down upon the ship from the mountain-land behind, and swept her helplessly before it. There was nothing for it but to let her drive; and as they ran under the little island of Clauda they barely succeeded in saving the ship's boat from being swept away by the storm. Then they undergirded the vessel, as it is called; that is to say they passed cables underneath her and drew them tight, so as to hold her together. In dread of being cast upon the great Syrtis, with its rocks and shallows, they now furled all the sails, made fast the rudderbands, and let the ship drive again. The next day they were so hard pressed that they had to lighten the ship of her cargo, and the day after that the passengers and crew threw out the very tackle with their own hands. Day after day the storm raged on with unabated fury, and they could see neither sun nor stars, and lost all hope of saving their lives. The mariner's compass of course was not invented in those days, and they had no means of knowing so much as in what direction they were drifting.

[Now when their despair and terror had long kept them

¹ See vol. ii. p. 512

fasting, Paul went to them and said: " You ought to have listened to me and not loosed from Crete, and then you would have escaped all this. But now I would have you take courage, for not one of you will perish, only the ship will be lost. In the night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I worship stood by me and said: ' Paul! you have no risk of death to fear. You must yet appear before the Emperor; and for your sake God will spare all your fellow-passengers.' So pluck up heart, my friends, for I trust in my God that it will all come to pass as the angel said. But we shall be cast upon some island."]

It was fourteen days since they had left Fair Havens and begun driving about in the Ionian Sea, when the sailors, suspecting that land was near, sounded, and read twenty and soon afterwards fifteen fathoms, or ninety feet; upon which they threw out four anchors from the stern, for fear of striking upon rocks. But as they were waiting and longing for the dawn the sailors contrived a treacherous plan, which Paul fortunately discovered and frustrated. They determined to escape alone in the boat, and leave the passengers to their fate. They were already letting down the boat, on pretext of putting out anchors from the prow, when Paul warned the centurion and his men of the danger: " If the crew deserts us you are all undone!" The soldiers, who were accustomed to the promptness of military measures, made short work of it by cutting the ropes and letting the boat go. [Towards daybreak Paul exhorted them all to take food, for they had been in such terror for their lives during the last fortnight that they had eaten nothing. They had better refresh themselves now and be ready to save themselves, for not a hair of their heads should be hurt. With these words Paul took some bread, uttered the blessing aloud, broke, and began to eat. Then they all imitated his example and were greatly relieved.] The last rations were served out, every one eating as much as he chose, and then they further lightened the ship by throwing out all the provisions, of which there must have been considerable stores, for the passengers were numerous.

Now when day broke they could not recognize the land but they saw a creek with a shelving coast, and determined if possible to bring the ship into it. So they took up the anchors, loosed the rudderbands, hoisted the top-sail to the wind, and made for the coast. But they struck upon a bank and were stranded. The vessel's prow was fixed immovably, and the waves dashed her stern to pieces.

The soldiers suggested killing the prisoners, for fear some of them should swim off and escape ; but the centurion [who was anxious to save Paul] would not allow it, but commanded those that could swim to throw themselves in first and make for the land, after which the rest must save themselves as best they might on planks and spars. Thus they all came safe to land. The supposed spot at which they landed, on the north-east coast of the island of Malta, is still known as St. Paul's Bay.

This narrative of the voyage and shipwreck bears unmistakable signs, apart from the use of the first person, of coming from an eye-witness. The passages included in brackets, however, may be removed without breaking the connection ; they betray a different style from that of Titus, are often in contradiction with his narrative in general or with some of its details, and are always in perfect harmony with the purpose of Acts, which would be enough in itself to make us suspect them. Moreover they are intrinsically improbable.

It was not long before they discovered that they were on the island of Melita. They were received with the greatest kindness by the inhabitants, who were Carthaginians by descent. They lighted a fire for them and took them all in to protect them from the furious rain and the cold. Now when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and thrown them upon the fire, an adder darted out, when it felt the heat, and fastened upon his hand. When the people of the place saw the creature hanging on his hand they said to each other : " Surely this man must be some murderer whom Dike (the goddess of justice) cannot suffer to live, even though he has escaped from the sea." But Paul shook off the adder into the fire and suffered no harm. They all expected him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead ; but after a good while, when they saw that nothing happened to him, they completely changed their opinion and held him for a god. Now the governor of the island, a certain Publius, had an estate in the neighborhood, where he hospitably entertained Paul and his friends for three days ; and in return the Apostle cured his father, who was in bed with fever and dysentery, by praying and laying his hands upon him. After this the other sick people in the island came and were healed ; upon which they overwhelmed the three friends with tokens of honor, and when they departed, three months afterwards, gave them every thing they could require.

We suspect that this account of the stay at Malta was not

written as it stands by Titus, but was modified and above all greatly shortened by the writer of the Acts. Surely Paul's companion must have recorded what took place after the first three days, and where they stayed during the three months they spent on the island after leaving Publius. He must also have had something to tell us of the winter's doings, for we may be sure that Paul was not sitting idle all the time. Even the stories about the first two days were probably not recorded by Titus as we now have them. At any rate they raise our suspicion on several grounds. For instance, if the people came to regard Paul as a god, we might fairly expect to hear how they showed their belief and how Paul corrected them. At any rate, if the story is not an invention by the author of Acts, suggested by reminiscences of Lystra, we must suppose that it is broken off in the middle. So again the cure of all the sick people in the island, recorded in such a summary style, reminds us of a special characteristic of the writer of Acts, and is doubtless his addition.¹

The spring had now arrived, says Titus, and with it came an opportunity of sailing for Rome. An Alexandrian vessel, the "Castor and Pollux," had wintered at the island and now took our travellers on board. First they sailed to Syracuse, where they spent three days; then they coasted along the east of Sicily and the southern extremity of Italy, where they reached Rhegium, and were then carried by a south wind in less than two days to Puteoli, near Naples. Here their voyage was at an end and they took a week's rest. Our travellers found some Christians there, and received from them the refreshing sympathy they so much needed as they drew near to Rome, equally uncertain of what awaited them from the judicial authorities and from the Christians. Then they went along the famous Appian Way, through the plain of Campania and the Pontine Marshes, to the capital of the world.

The news of their arrival on Italian soil had gone before them, and a band of Christians had come to meet them at Appii Forum, a notorious place about thirty-nine and a half miles from Rome; others met them at the Three Taverns, a baiting place some nine miles further north,—all which restored the Apostle's courage, and he thanked God. The place of their destination was now soon reached.

So Paul was at last in Rome, though under very different circumstances from those he had anticipated.² Prisoner as he was, he still found some opportunities of work. Accord-

¹ See pp. 472, 539, 540, 494, 496.

² See p. 605.

ing to an old account,¹ the prisoners were at once conducted to the barracks of the imperial guard (the Praetorians) at the other end of the city, and given in charge to their commander, — who was the celebrated Burrhus, Nero's tutor and good genius, but soon to be his victim. This is very credible. The Apostle, we are further informed, obtained leave to live in his own lodgings with the soldier who had charge of him and to whom he was chained by the arm, provided of course that these lodgings were within the barracks or their immediate neighborhood. He was even allowed to go out with the soldier. He could receive visits and write letters. In short he enjoyed an amount of freedom which enabled him still to do something towards accomplishing the task of his life.

But what was his reception by the Christians at Rome? Much depended upon this, not only with respect to the alleviations of his personal lot, but with regard to the abundance of his opportunities of labor and the prospects of their bearing fruit. What impression had his letter made two years before? We have just heard that some of the brethren came to meet him; but we knew already from his own epistle that there were some who sympathized with him at Rome, and the letter itself can hardly have failed to do something, at least, towards attaching others to his person and his gospel. But what about the community as a whole, or the Jewish-Christian majority, which joined the great Jewish population of the capital in its detestation of the Roman government, which observed the Sabbath and the Jewish feasts, and some members of which abstained, in Essenic piety, from all animal food?² We find no answer to this question in the book of Acts. At Rome the author breaks off the diary of Paul's companion, just as he did before at Jerusalem, and even seems to have greatly abbreviated the record of the meetings at Puteoli, at Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns. Hardly any of the remaining statements in Acts deserve credit.

Within three days of his arrival, we are told, Paul summoned the heads or leaders of the Roman Jews, and set forth how he had been seized at Jerusalem and handed over to the Roman governor at Cæsarea, without having committed any offence against his people or against the customs of the fathers. The governor had looked into the matter and had

¹ Acts xxviii. 16. (In the "Authorized Version," but not in the oldest manuscripts.)

² See pp. 606, 608, 545.

wished to set him at liberty, but the opposition of the Jews ran so high that he (Paul) had felt constrained to appeal to the Emperor, though he had not the least intention of lodging any complaint against his people. All this had made him wish to see and speak with them, for he wore his chains in the cause of Israel's Messianic expectation. The Jews answered that they had received no letters about him from Judæa, and had never heard any ill of him by word of mouth; but they desired to hear what he had to say, for all they knew about this sect of the Nazarenes was that it was everywhere spoken against. So a day was fixed, and they came in great numbers to his dwelling, where he clearly and powerfully preached the kingdom of God and demonstrated the Messianic dignity of Jesus out of the Law and the Prophets from morning till evening. Some of his hearers were convinced, but others remained unbelieving. They departed therefore contending with each other, while Paul reminded them of that cheerless saying of Isaiah's about the impenitence of Israel,¹ and exclaimed: "Know then that this divine salvation is now offered to the gentiles, and that they will receive it." And so it was. For two whole years Paul remained in his own dwelling and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching them about the Lord Jesus Christ, boldly and without hindrance.

Observe that in this narrative Paul's communications with the Christian community and the relations in which he stood to it are studiously passed over, and an interview with the Jews is substituted, although really the Apostle had nothing at all to do with them. The description of the meeting itself is full of impossibilities. These Jews have never heard any thing about Paul, good or bad, by writing or by word of mouth! What is more, they know nothing about the Nazarenes except that they are spoken against! The writer forgets that only a few lines back he has spoken of Roman believers. Finally, in express contradiction of the Apostle's own declaration in his letter that he was coming to Rome especially for the gentiles, we are once more told, amid repeated assertions of his orthodoxy, that he turned first to the Jews, and only felt at liberty to go to the heathen when the Jews had manifested their want of faith. Thenceforth he preached to the gentiles under the friendly protection of the Roman authorities.

Thus the only statement which we can accept is the con-

¹ See vol. ii. p. 249; and p. 143.

cluding one, that Paul spent at least two years in Rome as a prisoner, but was not altogether deprived of the opportunity of preaching the gospel. For the rest, the author does not give us a single detail concerning all this period. Now that he has brought Paul to Rome and seen him preach Christianity under the protection of the State, his book is completed. We must therefore look round for other sources of information. Our author's silence as to the relations between the Apostle and the Christian community at Rome gives grounds for unfavorable surmises, which find confirmation elsewhere; for we still possess three short letters which are attributed with more or less probability to Paul, and which, if really his, must have been written during his Roman imprisonment.

The most doubtful of the three is a short note to Timothy, supposed to be preserved in our Second of Timothy,¹ which is certainly not authentic as a whole. We mention it with the less hesitation because, even if not from the Apostle's own hand, it may very well contain a few historical reminiscences nevertheless. Here Paul complains that no one had been with him to support him at his first trial; but though all had deserted him, yet the Lord had helped him and strengthened him, that he might finish his task and preach to all the heathen. Thus had he been saved from the jaws of death. He mentions particularly that a certain Alexander, a coppersmith, had treated him with great hostility, and that all those of Asia had turned away from him. The Ephesian Onesiphōrus was a pleasing exception. He had previously done great service to the good cause in his native city, and had recently searched for Paul in Rome until he found him, had not been ashamed of associating with a prisoner, and had often refreshed his heart. At the moment of writing the Apostle was bereft of the society of all his friends except Luke, and he therefore urgently begged Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible and bring Mark with him.

The second of the letters we spoke of is probably authentic. It is the little note to Philemon, whom we know already as a fellow-worker of Paul, and one whom he himself had brought to the faith.² Now one of this man's slaves was a certain Onesimus, who had robbed or otherwise injured his master, and then run away for fear of punishment. He had come into accidental contact with Paul at Rome, and had been converted to Christianity. The Apostle had conceived a sincere affection for him, and had found him so serviceable that he would

¹ 2 Timothy i. 1, 2, 15–18, iv. 9–18.

² Philemon verse 19; compare p. 590.

gladly have kept him at his side. But nevertheless he determined to do without him, and persuaded him to return to his master, whose property he still remained; but for fear of his being heavily punished he gave him this letter to take with him.

It is addressed to Philemon and also to Appia and Archippus, probably his wife and son, and the congregation that usually met at his house. Paul leaves no means untried to secure pardon for Onesimus. He adopts the most winning tone, reminds Philemon of his advanced age and his imprisonment for the gospel's sake, speaks of Onesimus as henceforth less a slave than a brother, tries every means of pleading for him and commanding him to his master's forgiveness. He playfully draws out a formal order to Philemon to settle the slave's debts from his (Paul's) account, reminds Philemon how much he owes him, and expresses his hope of a speedy release, when he will visit Colossæ and stay with him.

We value this short letter, not only because of the interesting and characteristic circumstance which it records, and the testimony it bears to Paul's personal influence, even on a runaway slave, and his tact in pressing a delicate point, but also because it shows us that at this moment he had some prospect of being released, and intended when free to go to Asia Minor. Moreover the greeting shows us that the Colossian Epaphras, whom we know already, shared the Apostle's captivity, and that Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke were with him, besides Timothy, in whose name, as well as his own, he sends the letter.

The epistle to the Philippians yields a richer harvest. If, as we have supposed, it is really from the Apostle's hand, it must have been written and sent off when he had already been in Rome some time, perhaps at the end of 63 A.D. A short time before he had experienced a great delight. A former fellow-laborer and fellow-soldier, Epaphroditus, a Philippian, had searched him out at Rome, and had brought him a present in money, which must have been exceedingly welcome, in the name of the believers of Philippi. Anxious days had followed, for Epaphroditus fell dangerously ill. When he recovered he longed to return home, especially since his friends were uneasy about him. So Paul sent him on his way, with hearty gratitude, and gave him this letter to the Philippians, in the greeting of which the name of Timothy again appears.

We learn from the contents that the Apostle's imprisonment was not without fruits for the gospel. The imperial body-

guard and others with whom he was thrown into contact gave him their attention ; and, what was more, many of the Roman Christians were encouraged by his example to preach the Christ boldly, though with very diverse motives,—for while some were actuated by love and esteem for him, others (Jewish-Christians) cherished the hostile design of aggravating the trials of his present lot. But in any case Christ was being preached, and that was his greatest joy and blessing.

We are further given to understand that he had drawn together a band of believers, whose greetings he sends, and had even won certain members of the Emperor's household, probably subordinate officials or servants, for the gospel. But meanwhile he could not rely upon all his fellow-workers ; for when he announces his intention of sending Timothy to the Philippians, in hopes of receiving good news of them, as soon as he can foresee with certainty the result of his trial, he adds that he has no one else with him so faithful to him and so sure to regard their interests as Timothy. All the rest were selfish, but the Philippians knew Timothy of old.

Paul also relied upon going to Philippi himself. But his mood and his personal expectations constantly change as he writes. At one moment he expects a martyr's death to crown the work of his life, which he himself would wish, for then he would be taken straight to Christ as one who had died for him.¹ But generally he feels no doubt that he will be released, perhaps speedily, and will continue to work perhaps till the return of the Lord ; for this would be best for the community. In any case the result, whether life or death, will be to the glory of the Christ.

Throughout this letter, addressed more especially to the overseers and deacons of the community, we are struck by the warmth of tone and the intimate relations which had subsisted from the first between the Apostle and the Philippian converts. The latter, as we know already, had shown a generosity even beyond their means on occasion of the collection for Jerusalem, had twice sent sums of money to the Apostle more than ten years ago, and now came to his assistance again. Paul on his side made an exception in their favor to his otherwise universal rule of accepting no subsidies from his converts. In many respects the Philippians gave him cause to rejoice ; and they were now suffering oppression for the faith as he was himself. We notice, especially in the early portion of the epistle, that Paul has learned to separate

¹ Compare p. 333.

his own person from the cause of the gospel, and has become genuinely tolerant towards the opponents who pursued him with relentless hatred even to Rome. But in the two concluding chapters he falls into the old tone, denounces them more bitterly than ever as "dogs, evil workers, mutilated." In answer to their Jewish arrogance he once more enumerates the legal privileges which he had cast under his feet for Christ's sake,¹ and calls them enemies of the cross. He emphatically warns the Philippians against them and against all sectarian animosity, exhorts Euodia and Syntyche by name and the community in general to unanimity, humility, and self-denying love, after the example of Christ, who had relinquished his heavenly glory, and had been obedient even to the death upon the cross.

"Be blameless and upright, unpolluted children of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear like lights of heaven in the world!"² Paul had good reason to utter such words as these to the Philippians, for if he saw or heard any thing of what was going on at Rome, its foul iniquity must have sent a sickening shudder through his heart, and made him more certain than ever that the Lord was near at hand and that the world hastened to its close. Such a wild outburst of shameless infamy as took place in 62 A.D. and the following years, under Nero's rule, the world has never witnessed before or since. We suspect that the Apostle himself was one of its victims.

We suspect it, but we cannot be certain. Since the book of Acts breaks off abruptly after mentioning that Paul remained two years in Rome, it follows that after this period some change in his lot took place. Why is there not a word about his subsequent fate, whether release and renewed activity or the death of a martyr? A later tradition, founded on what was known or reported of Paul's own plans and expectations,³ says that he was set at liberty, that he carried out his original projects, was then taken prisoner again, and perished in Rome by the hand of the executioner in the year 67 A.D. The legend adds that it was on June 29, and that Peter was his fellow-victim, Paul being beheaded and Peter crucified with his head downwards. But all this is groundless speculation. There is no trace of the Apostle's life or preaching after the period to which we have already brought them; and the detestation with which the Christians were regarded

¹ See p. 520.

² Philippians ii. 15.

³ See pp. 605, 638, 639.

just at that moment in Rome makes it highly improbable that Paul should have been released. We have every reason to suppose that he perished amid the horrors of the summer of 64 A.D. But why does the author of Acts tell us nothing? Why does he simply drop his hero, as he has previously dropped Peter and Barnabas? There is not the smallest indication that he intended to complete his task in another work, and even if there were we should still have to ask why he broke off just here. Is it possible that his anxiety to hold the balance between Peter and Paul induced him to say nothing of the latter's crown of martyrdom, because tradition had not as yet woven the similar crown with which it afterwards¹ girt the brow of Peter? Or did he stop at this point because he had completed his design of portraying the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, and because the constant burden of his narrative had been the friendly reception and protection which Paul had received at the hands of the Roman magistracy, so that he shrank from destroying the impression by touching on the fierce contrast of that dismal close, in the horrors of Nero's persecution, in which the Apostle disappeared?

Enough! On July 19, 64 A.D., a fire broke out at Rome and made unheard-of ravages. It spread with incredible rapidity, and nothing could check its fury. It was not till the sixth day that it seemed to be got under, and it soon broke out again and raged for three days more. Of the fourteen districts of the huge capital but four remained. In seven the fire had left charred and blackened walls alone, and the other three were heaps of smoking ruins! The maddened populace believed that the Emperor had kindled the flames; and he was doubtless guilty in the matter, though he could not have foreseen the appalling catastrophe. Now when Nero found that no religious processions and no generosity of provision for the impoverished victims of the disaster could free him from the suspicion he had incurred or restore him to popular favor, he adopted fresh tactics, and declared that a strict investigation had brought it to light that the fire was raised by the Christians.

Who furnished him with this monstrous conception? Can it have been his Jewish favorites? In any case the story found acceptance. The Christians, who had increased considerably in numbers since Paul arrived in Rome, and whose organization was now more distinct than formerly from that of the

¹ John xxi. 18; 2 Peter i. 14.

synagogue, had excited public attention ; while their holding aloof from the corrupt heathen society and their expectation of the end of the world, which some of them may have hailed in this very fire, had earned them the character of “ enemies of mankind ” with the populace and the cultivated classes alike. A horrible persecution broke out. Some of the believers were crucified. Others were thrown to the lions in the amphitheatre, or wrapped in the skins of animals and torn to pieces by bloodhounds. Yet others were smeared with resin and pitch, secured to stakes of pinewood, and lighted up at nightfall to serve as torches.

The last traces of Paul are lost in this night of horror. Are we to look for his blackened corpse among the ruins of the conflagration ? Or did he literally fight with wild beasts, and this time without being saved from the lion's mouth ?¹

Of his friends and fellow-workers, too, we have lost all certain information, except that we are told a few years later on that Timothy had been a prisoner, and was just released. Uncertain speculations or traditions point out Apollos as the possible author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Mark and Silvanus as the companions of Peter, and Titus as laboring in Crete and in Dalmatia.² But the fate of these men is far from exciting the same interest in our minds as that of the Apostle himself. The dead silence of history, unbroken even by his biographer and defender the author of Acts, has involved his martyr-death in obscurity, and has suffered this greatest of the followers of Jesus, this founder of the Christian Church, to fall by an unnoticed — and in that sense an inglorious — death. In this there is something very painful.

Paul was such as we have described him, — the greatest of the followers of Jesus, and the founder of the Christian Church ! Attempts have indeed been made to exalt him at the expense of Jesus, and to place him above his Master in penetration and grasp of mind, in freedom and breadth of view, and in superiority to national prejudice. This is a mistake. The admission of the heathen to the kingdom of God had already found a place in the mind of Jesus. All that was great and good in Paul's work he accomplished under the mastery of Christ's spirit ; and he himself ascribed it all, and ascribed it solely, to the might of the Christ which had come upon him and dwelt in him. Nay ! we must go

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 32 ; 2 Timothy iv. 17.

² Hebrews xiii. 23 ; 1 Peter v. 12, 13 ; Titus i. 5 ; 2 Timothy iv. 10.

further: He stands so far below Jesus, that in his subtle doctrinal system we can hardly recognize the simple but eternally-enduring and inexhaustible wealth of the principles of Jesus; in the sharp lines of his personality we can hardly trace the lineaments of the beloved image of Jesus. But this is undeniable: that the victory of the gospel over the heathen world is mainly due to the power and the gifts of Paul, with his insignificant person but his mighty spirit, with his zeal and inspiration, his elasticity and perseverance, his unconditional self-surrender to his work. It was he whose marvellous power and intensity of soul and utter self-sacrifice severed Christianity from the synagogue, when without him it would have remained an insignificant or forgotten Jewish sect; it was he who worked it out into a new principle of life and a new system of religion, who proclaimed and established it in two continents with a courage, an energy, and a perseverance that have never been surpassed. In a word, Christianity, and therefore humanity, owes an inestimable debt to Paul; and, except Jesus, we know of no human being who has won and still retains, after so many ages, an influence like his.



CHAPTER XII.

THE COMMUNITIES AFTER THE DEATH OF PAUL.

MATTHEW XIII. 24-30, 36-43. REVELATION; JAMES; JUDE. HEBREWS; COLOSSIANS. 2 THESSALONIANS; MATTHEW XXIV. 4-41;¹ LUKE XVIII. 1-8; 2 PETER. 1 PETER; EPHESIANS; 2 TIMOTHY; TITUS; 1 TIMOTHY; 1 JOHN; 2 JOHN; 3 JOHN.

IN making ready for the kingdom of God, many perplexities arise, such as this parable may illustrate:—

“A certain man had sown good and pure seed upon his land. But while he was asleep his enemy came and scattered darnel seed all about among the wheat. Both wheat and darnel grew up for a time without any one noticing the difference; but when the ears began to form, then the laborers saw with dismay that the wheat was all mixed with the shabby darnel-stalks. So they went to ask their master what it could mean, and he replied: ‘A hostile man has done it.’ Then they asked whether they should not go at once and weed out all the darnel; but he checked their zeal

¹ Mark xiii. 5 ff.; Luke xvii. 22 ff., xxi. 8 ff.

and forbade them, because they might so easily root up the wheat with it. ‘Let them both grow together,’ he said, ‘till the harvest. Then I will tell the reapers to pick out the darnel before they bind up the sheaves, and to make it up into bundles for the furnace; but the corn they must gather into my barn.’”

Possibly this parable is founded upon some simpler one which Jesus may really have uttered as a companion to that of “the sower.”¹ But in its present form it is due to the Jewish-Christians, and refers to what they regarded as the melancholy spectacle of so many members of the Christian communities still preserving their gentile modes of life. Such men among the true heirs of the Messianic salvation were like darnel among wheat.² They well knew that it was all the work of “a hostile man,” who had scattered the false doctrine of “lawlessness” far and wide. Observe that this expression, “a hostile man,” occurs elsewhere in Jewish-Christian writings, where it is unmistakably used to designate Paul. And it is doubtless specially to him that it applies here also. It was he who had planted the weeds! But how could the Lord suffer such a state of things to continue? Alas! in many a place the separation could not be effected except with great hurt to the faithful; and before long, at the day of judgment, the Lord would command the angels to sift out the members of the community who ate meat sacrificed to idols, or were guilty of any other such “abomination and uncleanness,” and consign them to the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.³

But when the first Evangelist took up this parable into his narrative, we see by the interpretation he adds that he was not aware of its strongly anti-Pauline purpose. He simply took it to mean that the Church, by the will of her Lord, must suffer the wicked to remain among the faithful until the last judgment. So he says: “The weeds are the children of the devil, and the ‘enemy’ is the devil himself.”

Now when we consider it rightly, we shall find in all this the brief epitome of the internal history of the communities after Paul’s death. In the first place, the parable itself reflects the unabated bitterness of the Jewish-Christians against the disciples of the Apostle of the gentiles, together with the unshaken hope of all the believers alike in the speedy and glorious return of the Christ. In the next place, Matthew’s interpretation indicates the disappearance of these

¹ See p. 153.

² See pp. 585, 586, 101.

³ See pp. 307, 308.

early disputes, together with the relinquishing of the ideal of a pure community, and the design of taking up and holding together in the Church good and bad alike ; all which makes up the old Catholicism. These three points then we must briefly deal with in succession : first, the continued strife ; second, the disappointed expectation of the Christ's return ; third, the rise of the Catholic Church.

Perhaps Paul's great opponent, James, had already sealed his faith with his blood before the Apostle of the gentiles himself. His death, it is believed, was compassed by the violence of the high priest Ananias ; for the governor Festus died after holding office but a short time, and his successor, Albinus, did not arrive at once, whereupon the high priest seized the opportunity of condemning certain persons at Jerusalem to be stoned, one of whom may have been James (63 A.D.). Another tradition, preserved by the oldest Church historian,¹ declares that James “the just” had been brought to the roof of the temple in order to deny the Crucified before the people ; but that instead of doing so he bore mighty witness to his faith in him, upon which he was hurled down to be stoned to death, and while he was still praying for his murderers was dispatched by a certain fuller (69 A.D.).

Concerning Peter and John we have nothing but uncertain and untrustworthy traditions. Peter is said to have founded the communities at Corinth and Rome (!), and even to have been bishop in the latter place for five-and-twenty years (!), and to have met a martyr's death there. John is said to have taken up his abode in Asia Minor, especially at Ephesus ; there to have composed the Gospel, the three letters, and the Apocalypse (Revelation), which bear his name, to have outlived the persecution of the emperor Domitian (between 81 A.D. and 96 A.D.), and to have died, or at least fallen asleep,² at an extremely advanced age. All this rests upon loose foundations or upon none at all, and is partly contradicted by the oldest accounts. All the Apostles disappear without a trace.

But though the heads of the primitive community and all the first generation of Jewish-Christians had left the stage, together with the Apostle of the heathen, yet their followers, who generally adopted their names and are therefore personally unknown to us, continued the strife. Still keeping within the limits of New Testament literature, we pass over the

¹ See p. 545.

² See chap. xiii. p. 666.

spiteful stories preserved elsewhere which were circulated against Paul, together with the elaborate fiction of a sustained personal conflict between him and Peter, who is said to have followed him to Rome and overcome him there.¹ Nor shall we dwell on the unfavorable attitude adopted towards Paul by renowned and influential Christian writers of the second century. But we have already given several examples of hostile utterances preserved in the Gospels and Acts,² and will now consider two productions, emanating respectively from the extreme and the moderate Jewish-Christian schools, — namely, the Revelation (or Apocalypse), and the epistle of James.

In the Revelation we have the thoughts of a Jewish-Christian of Asia Minor, who may very well have been one of Paul's Ephesian opponents. This extraordinary work, to which we shall presently return, was composed some four and a half years after Paul's death, and contains a description of the immediate future and of the kingdom of God, addressed to the seven communities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The position taken by the author is highly noteworthy, especially as he represents a powerful section of the believers. Though he lays chief stress upon the moral requirements of the Law, and does not expressly maintain circumcision or sacrifice, he nevertheless remains a thorough Jew. In spite of the imposing titles which he lavishes upon Jesus, who is soon to return to earth, he still makes him essentially the Jewish Messiah; Jerusalem is still the centre of the kingdom of God; the Messianic salvation is still the heritage of the believing Israel, to be shared by the believing gentiles only on condition of their incorporation with Israel, and even then only on the inferior footing of proselytes. Rome, who oppresses Israel, who sheds the blood of the believers in Jesus, our author regards as the seat of Satan's empire. Every thing gentile, and all that indicates the least tendency or inclination towards gentile practices, he holds an abomination; the Jewish regulations as to food and cleanliness he regards as still binding. As a matter of course he exalts the Twelve to the utmost, and most emphatically denies the title of Apostle to Paul and his fellow-laborers, — none of whom he mentions by name, however. He brands with infamy Paul's precept to obey the heathen magistracy as God's servant, and in general launches into the most violent attacks upon his doctrine and his followers.

¹ Compare p. 618.

² See pp. 583 ff., 617, 307, 308.

We notice all this more especially in the introduction, which consists of seven letters addressed by the glorified Christ to the seven communities above named, and from which we gather what was their internal condition at the time. We notice at once that in the ten years since Paul's labors in this region had closed, orthodoxy had made rapid strides and had won over many of his converts. This was especially true of Ephesus itself, where the community is commended by our author for rejecting and hating the false apostles and their followers. But we also learn that this same brotherhood had greatly fallen off in love, in moral purity, and in Christian zeal. So, too, Laodicea and Sardis are reproached as unendurably lukewarm and dead-alive. Pergamus and Thyatira, on the other hand, are severely rebuked because many of the brethren in these places zealously upheld and practised Pauline principles; but the author admits that this detestable laxity was combined with steadfast faith and warm love. So, too, he praises and encourages the little community of Philadelphia and that of Smyrna for their perseverance.

If we ask what it was in the Pauline doctrines that especially shocked him, we find that he loathed them as teaching the believers to eat meat offered to idols, and to practise in chastity. As to the first point, we may remember that Paul declared the practice in question a matter of no consequence and quite permissible so long as it was not allowed to tempt the weaker brethren into sin. The second reproach is aimed at marriages forbidden by the Jewish law, especially marriages with heathen. Paul on his side had expressly forbidden the Christian husband or wife to seek a divorce from a heathen consort.¹ In a word, Paulinism, which was very likely driven to one-sided exaggerations at this time by some of the zealous preachers of enlightenment, was regarded by our author as contamination with heathenism, and he therefore denounces it as the doctrine of Balaam, or of the "Nicolaitans" (*i. e.* destroyers of the people of the Lord), or as the seduction of Jezebel.² Nay, if the Pauline Christians averred with their Apostle that they knew "the depths of the Deity" in the counsel for the world's redemption, our writer cried in answer: "They are the depths of Satan!"³ It could hardly go further than this!

¹ 1 Corinthians vii. 12 ff.; see pp. 554-557; vol. ii. pp. 480, 481, 503

² See vol. ii. pp. 208, 112, 135.

³ Revelation ii. 24; compare 1 Corinthians ii. 10.

Far different is the spirit of a certain letter written some twenty years or more after the fall of Jerusalem, in the name of James, the head of the primitive community. It was addressed by a believing Grecian Jew to "Israel in the dispersion" (*i. e.*, to the Jewish-Christians out of Palestine), and was probably sent to Alexandria. In this letter Paulinism is combated with much greater calmness, but with equal directness; and perhaps this little work is better calculated than any thing else to lessen or remove the prejudice with which we involuntarily regard the opponents of the Apostle of the gentiles.¹ For here we see a truly earnest, gifted, and noble nature entering the lists against Paul, on behalf of what seemed to be threatened morality. The writer's purpose is partly to encourage the community to which he writes under its sufferings, by pointing it to the hope that God will soon appear and establish His kingdom, but yet more to correct its worldliness and contentiousness. The believers were forever disputing about religious problems. Perhaps one or more Pauline Christians had recently come over and introduced the brethren to their doctrines and to some of their master's epistles, and, while rejected by the majority, were not without determined supporters. Upon this our author, a moderate man, averse to all contention, comes forward. Regarding all external precepts and ceremonial laws as having lapsed, and the distinction between Jew and gentile as having fallen with them, he insists with the utmost rigor upon the moral precepts of the Law, and makes a powerful attack upon Paul's central doctrine of justification by faith alone. He knew very well whom he was attacking; for he illustrates the doctrine in question by expressions and examples borrowed from the epistles to the Romans and to the Hebrews; but nevertheless he declares that any one who preaches this doctrine is a mere trifler, — for unless faith is supplemented by works it is dead. The fact is that he was far from having reached any such profound conception of the nature of faith as Paul entertained, nor had he really recognized the new principle of life in Christianity. Indeed, Paul's profundity of thought and intensity of emotional life brought him to a position too high for our author and the great majority of the believers to comprehend or attain to. The writer of this epistle was eminently practical, and he still felt the need of law. Christianity itself was to him a law to guide and control our lives. He therefore still held by the Jewish-Christian principle.

¹ See pp. 546, 547.

Here we may give the epistle of Jude a passing notice, for it too is of Jewish-Christian origin. It gives itself out as written by the brother of James (and Jesus), but is really of much later date. It is quite a short production and seems to be directed against a degenerate and one-sided form of Paulinism which pushed an exaggerated Christian freedom into the region of license. A host of sins are laid to the charge of its advocates, and divine judgment, illustrated by examples from the Old Testament and a quotation from the apocryphal book of Enoch, is denounced against them. The readers of the letter are urged to reflect upon the former warnings of the Apostles, and so to beware of false teachers, and to rescue their victims from them.

But now let us review some of the writings that issued from the other side in support of Paulinism. One of these, the epistle to the Hebrews, we just now referred to. We have already seen from scattered traces in the Gospels that the Apostle of the gentiles was by no means without warm supporters, who were zealous in defending his person and his principles.¹ Now the epistle to the Hebrews is a treatise which seems to have been written after the destruction of the temple, but before the epistle of James, and was addressed to Jewish-Christians who were in danger of being drawn back into Judaism by their excessive veneration for the Mosaic ritual. The author was evidently versed in the Alexandrian philosophy,² and this has given rise to the idea that he may have been Apollos. His conception of the economy of things is highly characteristic. To him the Jewish religion is nothing but a faint copy or shadow of the dispensation and the blessings of salvation, which have existed from eternity with God, and are now imparted to or realized in Christianity, or rather will be when Jesus returns and perfects the kingdom of God. Herewith of course the shadow or copy loses all right of existence. All the ritual and all the history of the Old Testament served simply as types to announce and foreshadow the new dispensation. Christ is typified by the high priest; his work, by the sacrifice of atonement for the people; the Christian life of faith, by the priesthood; the fruits of faith, by the sacrifices; the blessedness to come, by the rest of the Sabbath; the Christian community, by the people of God; the salvation held out to them, by access to the holy of holies; and entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem, by the inheritance of the Holy Land. Thus the Levitical priesthood, the sac-

¹ See pp. 542, 543, 583 ff., 309 ff.

² See pp. 7, 28, 96.

rificial ordinances, and all the types and foreshadowings together are now annulled. Christianity takes its own stand, not only in independence of Judaism, but in infinite exaltation above it.

The epistle to the Colossians is similar in tone. It may be partially founded upon some writing of Paul, but as it stands it was certainly drawn up some years after his death. It is directed against certain doctrines which were spreading among the gentile-Christian communities in Phrygia. The school from which they emanated united the abstinence of the Essenes to extravagant speculations as to the Godhead and the spirit world, and was thus related at once to the severest Jewish-Christianity and to later forms of Oriental heresy. The author of Colossians, like the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, is at once a disciple of Paul and of the Alexandrian philosophy, and he teaches that the truth and the salvation which always existed with God have been imparted to us in Christ. In him the fulness of the Deity is revealed, and in him the absolute redemption, the atonement that embraces all the universe, is accomplished. Christianity is the perfect religion, and gives perfect satisfaction to every want.

By and by, when we come to speak of the Catholic Church, we shall refer to a few more of the literary productions of the liberal party; but we have already traced the main lines at least of the attack and defence of Paulinism, and shall therefore go on at once to open another page of the early history of post-apostolic Christianity.

The points we have just touched upon make it all the more necessary for us to bear in mind that Jesus, the Apostles, and in a certain sense even Paul never intended to found a new religion. Their purpose was to enrol the citizens of the kingdom of God, and thus prepare for and hasten the dawn of the Golden Age. We have seen how Jesus adopted the expectation of Israel, how he purified it from the blots that disfigured it, and how he himself undertook the chief burden of realizing it. When he died, the hopes of his disciples, who had greeted him as the Messiah, were for the moment dashed to the ground, but they soon revived in connection with the belief in his resurrection. Whatever differences there may have been between the Twelve and Paul, they were completely at one in the hope that the glorified Master would soon return from his temporary abode and would bring the kingdom of

God to earth. This hope was the main-spring of their work, the secret of their energy and perseverance ; nay, it was their very life ! This hope was the substance of the preaching of Christ among all parties alike ; it was the great motive to repentance in Jew and Gentile ; it was the entrancing prospect held out to all the faithful. “ Maranatha ! ” — the Lord comes — bursts as a cry of triumph from every page of the apostolic literature.¹

We have already heard from Paul himself some of the details of the glorious future as he conceived it. From his doctrine that the flesh was the origin and seat of sin, it followed that it must be annihilated in the kingdom of God. In a moment of time, when the trumpet sounded for the judgment of the world and the resurrection of the dead in immortality, the living would be overspread with a spiritual frame like that of the Christ, preserved for them in heaven till then, which would supersede and utterly destroy their earthly body. This was the full redemption ! Then would the sons of God be glorified indeed, and finally Nature herself would be freed from the curse that pressed upon her because of the sin of man, and would be likewise glorified. For after the resurrection all rebellious powers would be subdued and death itself destroyed, and then the Christ would give up the kingdom to the Father, that God might be all in all men.²

We have also seen that at the close of his life the Apostle sometimes thought of the possibility of his dying before this time should come. Now since he as a martyr would not have to descend into the shadow-land, this thought brought no perplexity to him personally ; but it is only natural that in the course of time many of the faithful should have grown impatient or downcast when the Christ did not return. An indication of this may be found in the so-called second epistle to the Thessalonians, which oddly enough attempts to establish its own authenticity by warning its readers against forged epistles.³ This letter begins by describing how the Christ will come as judge, with glorious rewards and fearful chastisements ; but its special design is to relieve the strain of expectancy, and to point out by all manner of mysterious hints the reason of the delay. Wickedness must first reach

¹ See pp. 573, 600, 604, 607, 608, 640 ; also 447, 448, 482, 488, 489, 492, 495, 567, 569, 570, 571, *et seq.*

² Romans viii. 18 ff. ; 1 Corinthians xv. 23–28, 50–54 ; 2 Corinthians v. 1 ff. ; Philippians iii. 20, 21, *et seq.*

³ 2 Thessalonians ii. 2.

its culmination, and the grawsome foe must come who will put himself in the place of God and do miracles in the power of Satan. But as yet he is held back, and hence this delay. So the believers must wait in quiet trust.

We shall presently meet with this foe or Antichrist again. Meanwhile we may observe, in explanation of what is yet to come no less than what we have just noted, that there were other causes besides natural impatience which helped to plunge the Christians into all manner of speculations as to the future. They may be found in the special circumstances of the times, which are referred to in the vague hints just quoted. The hideous reign of Nero with his fearful persecution of the believers, the strained position of affairs after his death, the insurrection of the Jewish people, and much more besides, combined to inflame the imagination with visions of the speedy end of the world. We have still two writings in the New Testament which date from this period. Both of them belong to the *apocalyptic* literature, — that is to say they profess to lift the veil from the future; they imitate the prophetic writings (especially the visions) in form, and in substance contain a forecast of the immediate future, based on the application of ancient oracles to the circumstances of the day, and painted in glowing colors.¹ One of these two writings is the fugitive piece incorporated, with some modifications, among the latest utterances of Jesus, in the first three Gospels. It declares that after terrible wars, famine, pestilence, and earthquake, with a universal persecution of the Christians and finally one special event of unutterable horror, the Christ will come again in great glory amidst terrific signs in heaven.² There is an obvious reference to the Jewish war in all this. The Christians are told to flee to the mountain-land. But whether the original work really hinted at the fall of the people, of the city, and of the temple, — all which we find predicted and described in the latest additions, — it is impossible for us to say.³ The other apocalyptic work to which we referred is the Revelation, written at the end of 68 A.D., or in January 69 A.D., some months after the death of Nero, and given out under the name of John, or at any rate as the book of his visions, in which the Lord is represented as having revealed to him on the island of Patmos the approaching triumph of God's kingdom over hostile powers. The Apostle

¹ See p. 401 ; and vol. ii. pp. 555 ff.

² Matthew xxiv. 4 ff. (Mark xiii. 5 ff.; Luke xvii. 22 ff., xxi. 8 ff.); see p. 402.

³ Luke xxi. 20, 24.

John, however, had in all probability nothing to do with this book. Let us see what it contains.

First, as an introduction, the Christ appears and dictates the seven letters of which we spoke just now. Then the seer looks up into heaven where God sits on the throne of his glory, with the book of the future in his hand, sealed with seven seals. Who is worthy to break them? None but he who was slain like a lamb to found the kingdom of God. Endowed with God's power and wisdom this Lamb takes the roll, and while heaven rings with a hymn of praise to him he breaks the seven seals one after the other. As the seals are broken, the scenes of the immediate past and the future pass before our eyes. As the first four are broken, the Conqueror (that is the Roman Empire) marches forth upon the earth, followed by War, Famine, and Death, laying all things waste. When the fifth seal is broken, the victims of the persecution of 64 A.D. cry out for vengeance; but they must still be patient for a little while, till the number of the martyrs is complete. When the sixth seal is broken, terrific natural phenomena take place, as awful messengers of the judgment. This is the prelude.

The catastrophe is still delayed for a little while in order that the chosen ones—twelve thousand from each of the tribes of Israel, and a countless multitude from the heathen—may be taken under God's faithful protection against the coming oppression. Then, amid strained expectation, the last seal is opened. The seven archangels come forward with trumpets, and in answer to the prayers of the saints the judgment is proclaimed. As the first five trumpets sound in succession, desolating phenomena of Nature take place. When the sixth trumpet sounds, a numerous army advances from the East. This is the Parthian invasion which was expected. But those who have not perished amidst all these plagues still remain as godless as ever. A great angel now swears that the judgment is coming without delay. Jerusalem is trodden under foot by the Romans for three years and a half, the temple alone being spared, during all which time two witnesses of God are preaching as Moses and Elijah. Then they are killed by the Antichrist, but after three-and-a-half days are taken up to heaven; upon which the remnant of Israel is converted.

The seventh angel now blows the trumpet, as a sign that the end is come. A woman (the true Israel) is chased from heaven by the dragon Satan, and when her child (the Mes-

siah) has been taken up by God, she escapes to the wilderness (the Christian community retires to Pella, beyond the Jordan, a. the siege of Jerusalem). Satan, cast down from heaven, continues his persecutions. He gives his power to a monster with seven heads that rises out of the sea, and is worshipped by all the world (the Roman Empire, with its seven Cæsars from Julius to Galba). One of these seven heads is mortally wounded, but afterwards is healed (Nero, who was supposed not to be really dead, but to have escaped to Parthia, whence he would ere long return). This monster, Nero, whose name is given in figures,¹ is the Antichrist. Another monster who is in his service represents the lying prophets, who enjoin, among other abominations, strict obedience to the authorities, even should they be heathen. The Lamb, the Christ, sets himself with his saints against both these monsters on Mount Sion. An angel proclaims the gospel over all the earth ; another announces the fall of Rome ; a third utters a last warning before the judgment.

Then comes the end ! Once more seven visions pass before us. Seven angels advance with the seven vessels of God's wrath, from which none but the chosen are exempt. As they pour them out, one by one, seven plagues burst upon the impenitent world as judgments of God. Meanwhile Nero is hatching his evil plots among the Parthians. Rome, the City of the Seven Hills, appears in all her glory as a woman riding upon the monster, Nero, and wages war against the Lamb. The monster and his ten commanders themselves give over the capital of the world to destruction. Its fall is celebrated with triumph in heaven, but bewailed by the heathen on earth. Now the Christ comes to the battle with his war-hosts, vanquishes both the monsters and hurls them into the pool of fire ; vanquishes Satan and binds him for a thousand years in the abyss. For these thousand years the martyrs and the faithful reign upon earth with the Christ.

After this, Satan is released again and brings the barbarians of the North against the community, but is then subdued for ever. Then all the dead rise up and are judged according to their works. A new heaven and a new earth replace the old ; and the new Jerusalem descends, more beauteous than tongue can say or heart conceive, the seat of spotless sanctity and undisturbed delight. This is the perfected kingdom of God, whence pain and death and sin are banished ; it is the dweli-

¹ Revelation xiii. 18.

ing of God with men, the imperishable state of perfect glory and blessedness.

At the end of his book the seer still repeats the glowing assurance that the time is very near at hand, and the Christ is coming speedily. He had repeatedly laid down half a week of years as the limit.¹ Think under what a growing strain of expectation he himself, his friends, and the readers of his book must have lived from day to day! Was it possible that his reckoning should fail, and the promise and the hope be put to shame?

We know how completely these expectations were disappointed. Jerusalem, where the temple at least was never to be violated, fell utterly, and the sanctuary was laid low never to rise again; while Rome, instead of being turned to a desert, still held her rank and fame. Nero, the Antichrist, was dead and never returned to life; but neither did the Christ come back to earth. The martyrs were not avenged, but fresh persecutions awaited the faithful. The kingdom of Satan held its own, and the kingdom of God came not.

Words cannot tell the full measure of this disappointment. It was not confined to the author of Revelation, who had imagined he could fix the very moment. It was not confined to those Jewish-Christians who had gazed with him upon the breathless conflict between their countrymen and the Roman colossus, who like him had conceived it impossible that the only temple of the true God upon earth should be suffered to fall in ruins; who had been heart and soul with the Jews in their struggle, and had expected to the very last moment a joyous end, perhaps the kingdom of God itself. No! it was not confined to them; for all the Christians alike grew sick at heart when year after year passed by and still saw that promise unfulfilled which had been held before them from the very hour when they first believed, and had ever since been repeated and yet again repeated, as we saw from the epistle to the Hebrews and the epistle of James. And now the pressure of the evil times weighed heavier and heavier upon them, the prospect of deliverance held out to them had failed, the whole generation of the first believers had died out, and he who was surely to have come before that time in all his glory² still delayed. Alas! the community, bereft of her Lord and Head, was like a poor widow, — the helpless victim of violence and oppression, seeking protection and redress from the ruler of

¹ See vol. ii. p. 562.

² See, for example, Matthew xvi. 27, 28.

all the earth, and seeking in vain. What was she to do? She could but persevere, with indomitable resolution, in praying, urging, pleading, beseeching, and hoping. Even on earth the most inhuman judge would yield to such persistency!

It was in those days that the following story¹ was put into the mouth of Jesus:—

In a certain city there lived a judge who cared for neither God nor man. And there was also a certain widow there who came to him to tell him of her wrongs, and besought him to give her justice and to punish her oppressors. For a long time he would not; but still she persevered, and came to him every morning with her appeal. At last he thought, “Though I do it neither for God’s sake nor man’s, yet I must redress this widow’s wrongs, or she will fall upon me at last in frenzy.” Even the unrighteous would do thus; and shall God refuse to hear his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Must they still wait for justice? Nay, surely He will speedily redress their wrongs! But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

We can understand this metaphor, this reiterated assurance, this mournful and doubting question at the end! Meanwhile it was inevitable that many should grow weary at last of their unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes. And that they really did so is shown in one of the latest of the books of the New Testament, the second epistle of Peter. It is to some extent imitated from the epistle of Jude, and was written some time after 150 A. D., to confute certain false teachers, who abused their Christian freedom, and at the same time cried in mockery: “What has become of the promise of Christ’s return? Our fathers before us hoped for it,—and are dead. Every thing goes on just the same!” How does the writer refute them? He declares that the promise is certain, and refers in confirmation to the transfiguration on the mount,² and to the ancient oracles. The day of judgment will surely come, and the heaven and earth that now are will then be destroyed with fire. But God, to whom a thousand years are as a single day, is long-suffering towards the Christians; for He would not have any perish, but would have them all to be converted before the end.

This subterfuge certainly satisfied none who were not already determined to be convinced. But hope is tenacious of life.

¹ Luke xviii. 1-8.

² See pp. 502 ff.

We have now glanced at the continued divisions and the disappointed hopes of apostolic Christianity.

Some means of pacifying both the party spirit and the frustrated anticipations must be hit upon. Faith and hope alike were under a strain they could not bear. The continued existence and the growing strength of the communities, together with the natural tendency of the faithful to enter into united relations with one another, called aloud for the suppression of this conflict of parties; and the necessity was no less pressing for some relief from the constant strain of expectation, and a return to some settled order of life. This twofold want was met by the old Catholic Church, but greatly at the cost of faith and hope alike.

In the middle of the second century, and for a long time afterwards, we find a numerous party, both in Italy and in the East, claiming with a certain right to represent the genuine followers of Paul, though adding to the Apostle's doctrines certain subtle speculations quite foreign to Christianity, as to the nature of the Deity, revelation, creation, the Old Testament, and the person of Jesus. The head of this sect was Marcion, the fiery opponent of every trace of Judaism or Jewish-Christianity in the community. He and his followers recognized the authority of Paul alone, to the exclusion of that of the Twelve Jewish Apostles; as authentic documents of Christianity they accepted nothing but the gospel of Luke, here and there modified or condensed, and ten Pauline epistles; and they exaggerate the contrast between Law and gospel, between Israelitish and Christian religion, into an absolute contradiction.¹

At the opposite extreme stood the Ebionites, both at Rome and in Syria and Palestine. They were the real old-fashioned Jewish-Christians, the genuine sons of the primitive community. For themselves they held to circumcision and observance of the Law as conditions of salvation, and for the most part would have forced them upon the heathen converts also. In their conception of the person of Jesus they remained true to their Jewish point of view. They rejected Paul, or even pursued him with unabated rancor; and their favorite or only gospel was a version of Matthew slightly differing from ours.

But between these two extremes a third party had formed itself. It rose out of the other two by a gradual compromise, till at last it stood in a position of antagonism to both. It

¹ See pp. 21, 22, 301, 586.

was already the most powerful of them all, and presently it branded the irreconcilables of both the extreme schools as heretics, and shut them out of Christian communion. Every thing combined to secure its triumph. We have already seen¹ that the Jewish-Christians were early compelled to reduce their demands on the converted heathen very considerably. As the relative numbers of the gentile converts continued to swell, and the Jewish-Christians sank into an ever smaller minority, it became more and more impossible to compel the former to become Jews. Again, the fall of Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jewish nation worked powerfully in the same direction, for it deprived the Jewish-Christians of their chief supports and moorings, destroyed the imposing Jewish ritual, and threw much of the ceremonial law into disuse. Hence the expectation of the kingdom of God spontaneously dropped its characteristic Jewish tone, Christianity rose to complete independence, and was definitely separated from Judaism. Again, the death of Paul had put an end to his personal defence of his own character and position. Thenceforth the authority of the Twelve, especially of the three “pillars,” could hardly be contested. And, besides, the majority of the followers of Paul had never really understood the depth of principle between him and the Twelve had escaped them. All this will enable us to understand that they too came strongly under the influence of that conciliatory spirit which had dictated the epistle to the Romans and the journey to Jerusalem in the case of Paul himself. Under these influences they surrendered many points of essential importance, and indeed were ready to restore and maintain the unity of the Christian community at any price.

So now the sharp corners of Paulinism and Jewish Christianity alike were rubbed off. The observance of some few legal precepts were enjoined upon the gentile converts;² and though these ordinances were reduced within the narrowest limits, yet they involved the sacrifice of the great principle of justification by faith alone independently of all religious observances, and in this sense were as decisive as if they had been more numerous. Circumcision was given up, but baptism took its place as a compulsory form indispensable to salvation, and was declared to have been instituted by Jesus himself.³ Christianity itself was conceived, described, and applied as a new *Law*. The Master was declared to have

¹ See p. 597.

² See p. 556.

³ See pp. 472, 473.

entrusted the conversion of the heathen to the Twelve, and more especially to Peter.¹ And thus when Paul had been robbed of his real merit, his person, which was still regarded with animosity in many quarters, might be quietly dropped into the background; for now that the Twelve were regarded as the direct patrons of the heathen converts, the position of the latter in the Christian community in no way depended upon Paul, and it became equally superfluous to assert his equality or his subordination to the Jewish Apostles. At the same time reverence was paid to the principle of official qualifications and external authority; for the extension of the gospel to the heathen was regarded as resting upon the commission of the Master himself, as its only valid ground, instead of being due to the individual conception of one who came after him. This is characteristic of the direction taken henceforth by Christianity.

As illustrating this movement of conciliation, let us glance at the first epistle of Peter and the epistle to the Ephesians, two documents of great moral and religious as well as literary worth, dating from the end of the first or the early years of the second century. The book of Acts, of somewhat later origin, is also interesting from the same point of view. The first of Peter is designed to encourage the Christians under suffering and oppression, and to exhort them steadfastly to practise and confess the gospel; but its conciliatory purpose is also very obvious. It professes to have been written by Peter, and entrusted by him to Paul's fellow-worker, Silas (whom it highly commends), in order that he might deliver it to the Pauline communities in Asia Minor, to reassure them as to the genuineness of the Christianity they professed. Though the writer makes free use of the epistle of James, he is equally indebted to the epistle to the Romans, and he imitates the style of Paul. Paul's doctrine also reappears in its main features in this letter, though the writer does not grasp his full depth and scope; and the Pauline motto that gave so much offence—"justification by faith alone!"—is studiously avoided. Finally, the union of all Christians is repeatedly insisted on.

Nowhere in the New Testament is the effort to secure unity so obvious as in the epistle to the Ephesians, a document of no less value than the first of Peter. Here a Pauline Christian exhorts the gentile believers above all things to be tolerant, and to preserve unity in the bond of peace, which

¹ See pp. 471, 472, 553 ff., 293.

is the fruit of the Spirit. "There is one body, and one Spirit; one hope to which all are called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."¹ Nay, the unity of all the believers, whether Jews or gentiles, is the essence of God's eternal scheme of salvation, the final goal of the Christ's work. Then let party spirit utterly disappear; "all must attain to the unity of faith and the knowledge of God's Son."² The community is united to the Christ as a woman to her husband: it makes one single body, of which Christ is the head and the soul; it is a temple of God, of which Christ is the corner-stone, the Apostles and Christian prophets the foundation, the Jewish and gentile believers the well-set stones.

Finally, we have already seen how the author of Acts wrote his work with the same desire to secure peace and unity; how he completely disguised the former dissensions; how he made Peter almost a Pauline and Paul altogether a Jewish-Christian; and how he obliterated all the most striking characteristics from Paul's gospel.³ But we must not be too severe upon the author of Acts personally. It is true that in spite of his reverence for Paul he not only sacrificed his principles, but even maimed or falsified his history; but he really scarcely knew what he was doing. Paul's real gospel had become almost unintelligible to him; the historical tradition was often very turbid even when it reached him; the conditions of his own times he assumed to have existed in the Apostle's; and when he knew better, — well, well, for all that, these Ebionites and Marcionites could not and should not be justified by history! In a word, the preconceptions of those among whom he lived were so ingrained in him that he saw every thing through a colored glass.

His book was probably composed at Rome, which was the natural stage for the reconciliation, or rather confusion, of the two parties. After the fall of Jerusalem the centre of Christianity naturally gravitated towards Rome; and Nero's persecution, by conspicuously decking the Roman community with the crown of martyrdom, worked powerfully in the same direction. The independent rise, without any special founder, of the original community at Rome, before Paul or any other party leader had arrived there, likewise favored conciliation. Moreover the capital of the world, towards which every movement converged and in which they all mingled,

¹ Ephesians iv. 4-6.

² See, for instance, pp. 555, 616, 617.

² Ephesians iv. 13.

was in itself the most natural place for the Christian faith to find its own internal level in, so to speak, and set aside the dissensions of its factions. It is significant that a legend without the smallest historical foundation should have risen at a tolerably early period,—to the effect that Peter was bishop of Rome for a quarter of a century, that he and Paul preached there side by side, and perished as martyrs on the selfsame day. It is curious to note here as elsewhere that in these compromises and reconciliations Paul is always losing and Peter gaining ground: till at last the supremacy of the latter is undisputed, Paul is rather tolerated at his side than made the partner of his honors, and finally stands in need of his special recommendation.¹

In Rome a conspicuous part was also played in meeting the other demand to which we have referred. The disappointment which had waited on the glorious expectations of primitive Christianity must be concealed and forgotten. The Christians began gradually to accept the facts, and the strain of expectation was relaxed. They reconciled themselves as best they could with the present world and the established order of things, from which they had at first held sternly aloof in an attitude of extreme hostility, in the belief that all was to perish speedily. As Christianity spread, it betrayed a growing desire to seize and exercise something more than a spiritual power over the world, and, as a kind of compensation for the kingdom of heaven which never came, to establish a more familiar power,—in fact a kingdom of this world. The community, which had hitherto had an altogether provisional existence, now began to establish itself on a permanent basis. In a word, it became a *Church*; that is to say it regarded itself henceforth as a divinely-instituted vehicle of salvation, beyond the communion of which none could hope to be saved, which would triumph over every hostile power, however sorely beset, and would endure for ever. All this Jesus himself was said to have declared!² Henceforth this “*Church*” took the place of the kingdom of God. When the supernatural renovation of all things failed, the Christians instead of redoubling their spiritual efforts, returning to the primitive conception of Jesus, and trying to realize the moral ideal of the kingdom of God in this world,³ let the ideal go and embraced in its stead the wretched imperfections of the reality. Of course they could not simply

¹ 2 Peter iii. 15, 16.

² See pp. 151, 152, 317, 334, 335, 347 ff.

² See p. 319.

ignore this expectation of the glorious return of Jesus to the judgment, for it runs through every page of the apostolic literature ; but they relegated it to such a distant future that it amounted to much the same as abandoning it. Meanwhile they taught that each one as he died would at once receive his provisional sentence and recompense. So complete was the change, that ere long the preaching of the return of Jesus, which had once been the delight and strength of all the believers, had become the source of uneasy dread !

At the same time we are bound to admit that the establishment of the Church was really called for, in as far as it was needed to resist and crush those extravagances which have always attended the spread of every strong religious movement, and from which Christianity itself was by no means exempt. In the East especially a host of sects arose who brought the wildest speculations, often of heathen origin, into some kind of connection with the gospel or the person of Jesus, and commonly united them either with exaggerated self-discipline or with unrestrained licentiousness. The Church set her face against these sects, and proclaimed herself to be endowed with superhuman authority, and to be in the possession of the pure doctrine and the genuine commandments of Jesus. She had received them through Peter and the other Apostles, to whom Jesus himself had expressly entrusted this authority!¹ She declared herself to represent the union of all true believers in all the earth, of one heart and mind, wherever they might be, who might safely trust in all their trials in the protecting nearness of the Christ and the gracious favor of God ;² and so she called herself, in opposition to these heretics, the *Catholic*, or common, all-embracing, Church.

And now that Christianity had set foot on this new path, it would tread it to the end. The first necessity was to regulate worship. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, — both of them regarded as institutions of Jesus himself, and both of them acquiring by degrees the character of mysteries, — formed the centre of the new system. The observance of the first day of the week as the day on which Jesus rose from the dead took the place of the Jewish Sabbath ; for, although the Christians gradually framed their institutions more and more upon the model of the Jewish priesthood and temple, yet they made a point of breaking completely loose from Judaism itself, and, for instance, would not celebrate Easter on the day of the

¹ See p. 319; Matthew xviii. 18.

² Matthew xviii. 19, 20

Jewish Passover. There was a fierce conflict on this point, however, before it was decided.

Church government and church discipline now make their appearance. The main lines of the latter were, after the custom we have illustrated so often, embodied in a precept laid upon the lips of Jesus himself: "If a brother has sinned, go and reprove him privately yourself. If he listens to you, you have saved your brother; but if not, take one or two witnesses with you, according to the Law.¹ If he will not listen to them, bring the matter before the Church; but if he is obstinate even then, let him be as a heathen and a publican to you :"² that is, let him be laid under the ban of the Church. How far had the Christians strayed from the spirit of him who expressly sought out the publicans! We may call to mind, in passing, how Paul demanded the enforcement of church discipline at Corinth.³ This ecclesiastical ban, or curse, was destined to become a fearful weapon in the hands of the priesthood!

The authority of the Apostles offered a basis for the regulation of church government. Overseers or elders were early appointed in imitation of the practice of the synagogues.⁴ Deacons and deaconesses superintended works of love for the poor and the sick;⁵ and these, together with other offices, were duly regulated, and the qualifications for holding them defined. Most interesting contributions to our knowledge of this subject are furnished by the three so-called pastoral epistles, drawn up in the name of Paul. They are 2 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Timothy, and are chiefly concerned with questions of heresy and of church government. Here we find it laid down, for instance, that a man is not fit to hold office in the Church if he has married a second wife,—the first step towards the doctrine that the clergy should not marry at all. The purpose of these letters is to regulate church life, to draw the bonds of communion closer, and to uphold sound doctrine against false teachers. The office of overseer, or bishop, is especially exalted in the latest of the three (1 Timothy). The bishop is to be ordained by the associated elders, with the laying on of hands; he must be specially zealous in defending the purity of doctrine, and must see that others are so too; but he has also to undertake

¹ Deuteronomy xix. 15.

² Matthew xviii. 15-17.

³ See pp. 595, 602-604.

⁴ See pp. 140, 198, 512, 513, 534, 539, 554, 555.

⁵ See pp. 571, 639.

the general superintendence and discipline of the community, especially of the widows and female officers of the Church ; and his authority extends to the elders themselves.

Thus, to preserve the unity of the Church and to ward off heresy, the bishops were gradually distinguished from the elders and clothed with a special authority ; their nomination in due form was regarded as an appointment by the Holy Spirit to watch over the flock ;¹ they were consolidated into a spiritual order distinguished from the laity or ordinary believers ; and gradually a single head was placed in authority, first over a community, then over a province, then over a whole country. Thus we may trace a more and more distinct attempt to concentrate the governing power in a class, in an assembly, and finally in a single man. In the West that man was the bishop of Rome. So the Church was more and more completely modelled after the type of the Roman empire.

Thus the Catholic Church rose up against the heretics. To some of these latter we have already referred ;² and here we need only mention further a sect of believers who drew a sharp distinction between *Jesus* and *Christ*. They believed that the Christ was a supernatural being, who had been united with Jesus, an ordinary man, at the moment of his baptism in the Jordan, and had afterwards departed from him at the time of his suffering and death. This doctrine would have wrenched Christianity away from its historical foundations, and would have destroyed the meaning alike of Christ's example and of his death upon the cross. We mention this sect because the three so-called epistles of John are directed against it ; and in defiance of the original meaning of the term they stigmatize it as the Antichrist. None of these three letters themselves profess to be the work of John. The first of them is not really a letter at all, but an exceedingly beautiful treatise on Christian fellowship or unity of faith, based upon moral purity and manifested in works of brotherly love. The second and third letters are addressed, by an anonymous elder, respectively to an unknown woman or community and to a certain equally unknown Gaius ; and they contain warnings against the heresy of which we have just spoken and against one Diotrephes. They are thoroughly impregnated with the Catholic spirit.

In conclusion, it could not be long before the Church must feel the want of a list of apostolic or sacred writings, officially drawn up and established, to be placed side by side with the

¹ See p. 612 ; and 1 Peter v. 1-4.

² See pp. 650, 657.

Old Testament, as a “rule of faith,” or canon. We have already treated of the origin of all the writings ultimately included in this list, with the single exception to be dealt with in the next chapter; and we have seen that most of them were simply intended to serve some special or temporary purpose.¹ With regard to twenty of them, agreement was soon reached; but as to the rest great diversity of opinion long prevailed. Some received into their canon a letter bearing the name of Barnabas, and an epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, together with other products of the early Christian literature; others, on the contrary, rejected Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation,—or if not all, at least some of these books. It was not till the fourth and fifth centuries that the matter was finally decided.

But this lies far beyond our field. We have seen the Catholic Church wipe out both the dissensions and the disappointment of the primitive Christians, but greatly to the cost of faith and hope alike. How unlike is this Church to the kingdom of God which Jesus came to found! And yet its spread, its triumph, and its supremacy are the objects for which all the religious forces of Christianity are henceforth claimed!

But with this melancholy result we are not forced to conclude. Another attempt was made to solve the difficulties and remove the dissensions of Christianity. There were some who would not yield to the sad and imperfect reality, and lose themselves in it, as the Church had done; but rather sought a refuge in higher flights of philosophy and greater moral elevation, whereby they were enabled still to preach an ideal that was exalted beyond the reach of all opposition and all disappointment. In the canon itself there was room found for the witness of faith concerning the Christ of “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

¹ See pp. 573, 574, 580; chapters ix. p. 595, xii. p. 643, and pp. 22–33; see also chapter xiii. p. 666.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN.

WHEN we look into the Fourth Gospel we soon observe that the last chapter did not originally belong to it, but was added later. At the close of the previous chapter the work itself has come to a beautiful and appropriate close, after which we expect nothing more.¹ Nevertheless, when we examine this supplement carefully we find that it is not out of place, for it serves to throw light upon the meaning of the Gospel, or rather upon the person of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" on whose authority the Gospel is supposed to rest. Let us hear what it says:—

It was during the days when the Lord, having risen from the realm of shades, still appeared from time to time to his friends on earth. Peter, with Thomas, Nathanael of Cana, the two sons of Zebedee, and two others, had gone out to fish. The whole night long they had swept the Galilæan sea without taking any thing, when just at break of day they saw a stranger standing on the shore who asked them what success they had had. They told him none; and on this he confidentially urged them to cast the net on the right. They obeyed, and immediately found the net so full that they could not draw it up. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved knew that it was he, and told Peter; whereupon Peter threw his mantle round him, girded it close, flung himself into the water, and swam to the shore, which was about three hundred feet distant. The rest followed with the boat, dragging the net with the fish in it after them. On the shore they found a fire ready kindled, with some fish broiling on it, and some bread. Jesus told them to bring some of the fish they had taken; whereupon Peter dragged up the net upon the land, and, though there were a hundred and fifty-three great fishes in it, yet it was not torn. Then they ate together, Jesus acting as the host or head of the family; but they were all too much in awe to question him.

When the meal was over, Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Simon, son of Jona, dost thou love me more than these

¹ See p. 690.

others do?"¹ "Yes, Lord! thou thyself knowest that I love thee dearly," answered Peter. "Pasture my lambs!" replied Jesus. After a time he repeated the question, "Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me?" and when Peter gave the same unhesitating answer he again laid on him that task of honor, "Feed my sheep!" Yet again, the third time, he said to him, "Simon, son of Jona, dost thou love me dearly?" upon which the Apostle, tortured by the threefold question which referred so clearly to his own threefold denial, cried out, "Lord! since thou knowest all things, thou knowest this also, that I love thee dearly." Then Jesus answered, "Pasture my sheep!" and, telling Peter how he would be led as a captive in old age to the place of his execution, urged him to follow his Master to the very death. Now when Peter looked round he saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was also following. So he asked, "And what is he to do?" to which Jesus answered, "If I would have him abide till I come again, what is that to thee? Only see to it that *thou* follow me."

Hence rose a belief among the Christians that this disciple would not die. But Jesus had not said this, nor meant it. Now this was the disciple who bore his witness in this Gospel, and we may rest upon it with perfect trust.

This appendix is a symbolical presentation of certain passages of old Church history, according to the conception of the past and future entertained by the writer. To construct the picture he makes free use of a scene which he found described in Luke.² The first and fruitless attempts of the fishermen represent the preaching of the gospel to the Jews. The counsel of the Glorified One to adopt another method refers to the preaching to the heathen. So far our author agrees with Luke; but when he emphatically asserts, in opposition to him, that the net was not broken, he means to insist upon the unity and all-embracing communion of the faithful in the Catholic Church. The number of the fishes must refer in some way either to this Church itself or else to the different kinds or races of men to be taken into it. In the conversation with Peter, which follows, we find the disgraced disciple not only restored to his former rank and honor, but appointed chief shepherd of the flock till he glorifies God by a martyr's death. But what is intended by the beloved and trusted disciple "remaining," to which the whole scene is so obviously meant to lead up? And who is this disciple?

¹ Compare p. 420.

² See pp. 128, 129.

To begin with, the whole story, including the final saying of Jesus, is of course invented ; and the author introduces a supposed misunderstanding of the saying for the express purpose of indicating that the words must really be taken in a spiritual sense. But curiously enough, by pretending that this misunderstanding existed, he really gave it currency. After 200 A.D. it was generally supposed that the “disciple whom Jesus loved” was John, after whom accordingly the Fourth Gospel was named ; and the tradition arose that he had never died ! Thus, in the works of Augustine (400 A.D.) and later writers, we hear that John, after living in Ephesus to a very old age, feeling that his time was drawing near, lay down while alive in his grave, — where the ground still gently heaves in response to his breathing, and where he awaits the return of his Lord and friend. We may well doubt, however, whether John is really meant at all by the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” At any rate the true historical John — that narrow and violent Apostle, one of the two “sons of thunder,” one of the three “pillars” of the community of Jerusalem¹ — cannot be intended. We should be more inclined to think of Paul, were it not for the total absence of any reference to the circumstances of his life, and of any citations from his letters either in the “witness” itself borne by the disciple whom Jesus loved, or in the references made to his person.² No doubt we have really to do with an ideal disciple : if with John, then with a John so changed, enlightened, and purified as to be no longer recognizable ; in short, with such a disciple as Jesus never had in his lifetime, — one who lived in the closest communion with him, divined his thoughts, profited to the utmost by his intercourse with him ; one who thereby earned his unqualified confidence and approval, and now comes forward to bear witness to what he had seen in Jesus and what he had received from him.

Now when we are told that this disciple is to “remain” while Peter is to pass away, the meaning is that the latter, whose supremacy over the apostolic communities is not disputed, who is readily acknowledged as the highest guide of the Church, is only to retain his authority during his life ; whereas the disciple who read into the soul of Jesus will retain his influence till the perfecting of the kingdom of God. Or again, since the name of Peter, as well as that of the other disciple, stands for a principle, we may take the saying

¹ See pp. 548, 583, 181, 192.

² John xiii. 23, xix. 26, xviii. 15, xx. 2, 3, 8.

of Jesus to mean that the Church of Peter, the Catholic Church, as it began to establish itself towards the middle of the second century, had an indisputable right of existence, but yet only for a time. It must ultimately be superseded by a better state of things, which should endure, by a purer insight on the part of the community, by such an attitude of mind as is indicated in the Fourth Gospel, which must "abide" to the end of the ages. Thus Christianity might completely escape from the conflict of parties, not by concession and compromise, but by rising above both parties alike to a purer insight into the truth ; might receive the fullest compensation for the disappointed expectation, not by covering it up and forgetting it, but by securing the actual experience of the Lord's presence in that of the Holy Spirit. Testimony to a faith with such contents and of such purport as this would retain its power unweakened and unabated till the perfect order of things should come.

Let us now take into our hands this testimony of the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is the Fourth Gospel.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. By the Word all things were formed, and every thing was made what it is. To mankind It was the higher life and the light of truth ; but the sinful world rejected It."¹ We cannot fail to be struck by the exalted style of this introduction ; but do we understand its meaning ?

We must return to a consideration of the Alexandrian philosophy.² The central conception of this philosophy hinges upon the contrast between two worlds, a higher and a lower : the former an invisible and imperishable world of the spirit, or of veritably existing ideal types ; the latter the visible and perishable world of matter in which we live, an imperfect copy or impression of the other. The higher world was an immediate emanation from the Deity, his perfect revelation, his living type or image, and at the same time the mediator between him and our lower world. For God himself was conceived of as too exalted to stand in any immediate relations with imperfect or material things such as man and the universe ; far less could any human representations or expressions be worthily applied to Him. So these philosophers took up and elaborated the poetical personification of Wisdom which they found in the book of Job, in the Proverbs,³ and in

¹ John i. 1-5.

² See vol. ii. pp. 315, 316, 466, 568.

² See pp. 649, 650.

the apocryphal books of Jesus Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon ; but they no longer used the old word *Wisdom* to signify this ideal universe, which they now called the *Logos*. This word means both the unuttered conception of *reason* and the uttered conception of *speech*, and is commonly translated by *Word*. Had not the Deity called every thing into being by his *word*?¹ Gradually this *word* came to be regarded as a personal being existing by the side of God ; not self-existent and original as He, but spiritually put forth by the exalted God out of his own being, and made the partner of his attributes, — a kind of subordinate god in fact. Now these are the speculations which the fourth Evangelist adopts and applies to Jesus. In order adequately to explain and reproduce the impression he had received of Jesus he says : “ The Word became flesh [that is to say, Jesus was the Word in the material body of a man] ; in him might we see the divine glory, from him might we receive in inexhaustible abundance the treasures of divine grace and truth, unknown before Jesus Christ, — unknown even in the Law of Moses. For God is concealed eternally from his creatures, inaccessible and unfathomable to them ; but the Word, his own Son, who dwelt with Him in heaven in unbroken and full communion with Him, has come down to earth and revealed Him.”²

If we look back from the position we have now reached upon the life and work of Jesus, what a marvellous flight we have to note ! That life produced a Messianic movement on a very modest scale, which shrank from any noisy self-assertion, and was confined to the people of the Jews ; nay, even to the land of Galilee, for no sooner had it shown itself in the capital than it was crushed. And yet this obscure movement in the bosom of Judaism, simply because the pure and exalted personality of Jesus was at the centre of it, called into existence the Christian Church, one of the mightiest factors of the world’s history. Nor was even this enough. The coming of Jesus was at last regarded as the turning point in the history of the universe, nay, in the history of the Deity himself ! But when we examine all this more closely it need not surprise us. When Jesus was gone, those who had known him personally insensibly surrounded him with a glory that shone at last with a more than human splendor. The spiritual blessings which flowed in ever rich measure from his person and his gospel compelled the Christians to exalt him ever more and more. The title of Son of God, which his fol-

¹ See vol. i. pp. 35, 40, 293.

² John i. 14, 16-18.

lowers had given him as the future Messiah, was elastic and ambiguous enough to lend itself very readily to this process. The idea of his being the Messiah now no longer sufficed ; he was something other and something far more than the Jewish Messiah. The philosophy and theology of the day were laid under contribution ; and nothing could so well indicate his significance for all humanity, and his unapproachable exaltation, as the idea that he was the Word, the partner of the divine nature, and yet not the Deity himself.

Paul has prepared us for the doctrine of the Logos. In declaring Jesus to be a second Adam, he ascribed to him a pre-existence in heaven as the ideal man, and assigned him a share both in the work of creation and in the history of the world. But the transition from the early Christian conception to that of the Fourth Gospel is most clearly traceable in the Epistles to the Hebrews and the Colossians. For there Jesus Christ is called the reflection of the Deity, and the maker and sustainer of all that exists in heaven and upon earth. This is little short of saying that the eternal Word appeared in bodily shape in the person of Jesus. But in passing to the Fourth Gospel we find not only a great development of these germs that are already present, but also a marked change of fundamental conception. Paul looked on the earthly life of Jesus as a humiliation, and laid exclusive emphasis upon his death on the cross and his exaltation. The Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, regards all the life of Jesus as forming a single whole, — one continuous manifestation in word and deed of the Logos and its divine glory. In this life the Deity —not the supreme God indeed, for that was impossible, but His express image — had not only dwelt among men, but had actually entered into the collective conditions of humanity, assumed its nature, and accepted its historical context. A man was there who could say, “ I and the Father are one.”¹

This exalted conception gave occasion to the rise of the doctrine of the Trinity, and in it therefore the Alexandrian philosophy thenceforth dominated the whole doctrinal development of Christianity. And, moreover, it solved the several contradictions that existed within the apostolic communities. The fourth Evangelist has already passed far beyond the conflict between Judaism and Paulinism. He adopts a very hostile tone towards Judaism, and for him the Jewish religion no longer exists. His Christ and his Christians look upon

¹ John x. 30.

the “Law of the Jews” and the “Feasts of the Jews” as things with which they have no concern, and hold Jerusalem and Gerizim to be alike superseded as places of worship. The Evangelist’s great purpose, indeed, is to display the spiritual nature of Christianity: and he himself has risen completely above both the material Messianic expectation and the disappointment caused by its failure. The Christian community, in his conception, is far indeed from being defenceless and desolate,—bereft of her Lord and Head; for with the coming of his substitute and successor, the Spirit of truth, Christ has in reality returned already to his faithful ones. In this Holy Spirit the Christ himself dwells as it were in the hearts of the faithful, and reveals his presence, his truth, his glory in the free, strong growth of their personal life of faith. If Christ is thus present in the hearts that love him, then his return in the flesh can be thought of no more; if his Church is thus filled with his divine being, then the kingdom of God is already invisibly present on earth. The chasm between the present age and the age to come, preluded by the last judgment, is filled in; the faithful already possess and enjoy, here and now, the life eternal, or the fullest blessedness; the judgment is ever going on in the sifting of man from man by the word or the spirit of Jesus.

Not that the Evangelist thinks all conflict is over. On the contrary he perceives it everywhere. God and the devil, God and the world, spirit and matter, spirit and flesh, light and darkness stand over against each other. “The Word was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own people [Israel] and his own people received him not. But as many as received him to them he gave power to become children of God.”¹ The world is in a certain sense the kingdom of Satan; but Christ has come to deliver man out of his power and to conquer him. Mankind are therefore severed into two camps, as children of light and children of darkness, children of truth and children of falsehood, children of God and children of the devil. Nay, so sharply is the line drawn between these two that it almost seems as though the latter were of a different nature from the former, and had not the power to believe and be saved. Again, this Evangelist adopts a very special attitude towards the questions of his time,—the movements within the Church and the heresy without it. Indeed, he claims ‘o be the first who had fully comprehended

¹ John i. 10-12.

and proclaimed the spirit of Jesus in its full significance and exaltation ; so that we almost suspect that the appendix already described may perhaps be from his own hand after all, with the exception of the last verse, which is certainly not authentic. In any case, this appendix echoes the conception of the Gospel itself in declaring that Peter must make way for the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” and that that disciple must abide.

The Evangelist’s object is not to relate the history of Jesus, but to raise the testimony of faith. Apparently he had access to no trustworthy traditions except those contained in the Synoptic Gospels ; but he uses his materials with the utmost freedom, selecting what suits his purpose, and remodelling or even inventing whatever he requires. Sometimes he assumes the narratives of the other Evangelists as already known ; sometimes he is in flat opposition to them. Sometimes he disfigures well known historical personalities, such as John the Baptist, past all recognition ; sometimes he invents fictitious ones, such as Nicodemus. But the essential truth of his representation, in a higher than the historical sense, is above all doubt ; and he has given us a spiritual Gospel in which, according to his own express indications, the miracles themselves, which far transcend those of the first three Gospels, have also a spiritual significance. Thus he displays to all men the glory of the Word while abiding on the earth ; a divine glory which utterly precludes all conception of the Christ having developed after the fashion of a man in knowledge and sanctity, or struggled with the temptation to sin ; a glory, on the other hand, which shines as a more than earthly lustre in that struggle against Judaism, ever more and more desperate, and in that free endurance of outward shame in the death upon the cross. This glory the Evangelist himself had seen ; from this fulness he had received the highest gifts of grace and the purest insight into the truth. He had rested on the bosom of his Lord ; his witness is true, and he himself knows it ; for he is the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Let us hear from his lips how he first found Jesus.

There was a certain man called John, who was sent before by God to bear witness to all men of the Light, and who proclaimed his pre-existence and his lofty rank. Now the Jews sent a deputation of certain Pharisaic priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask this John whether he was the Christ, or Elias, or the prophet foretold by Moses ; and when he said

that he was none of these, but was that preparer of the way of whom Isaiah spoke, then they asked him why he baptized. On this he pointed to the great Unknown, who was on the point of coming forward. The next day he saw Jesus himself approaching, and, with his thoughts fixed on the redeeming power of his death on the cross, he called him the lamb ordained by God, that took away the sins of mankind.¹ Then he told how he himself had learned to know him, having come to baptize with water, as the herald of one whom at first he knew not but whom he had since found ; for He who sent him had said, “ Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descend and abide, he it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” And he had seen the Spirit like a dove come down upon Jesus out of heaven and depart from him no more ; wherefore he knew for certain and thenceforth bore witness that he was the Son of God. Upon what occasion it was that John saw this descent of the Spirit we are not told ; but there is no mention of Jesus being baptized, for such a thing would not be seemly for the Word made flesh.

Again, on the following day, he saw Jesus passing by, and pointed him out to two of his disciples who were with him, as the lamb given by God. So when these two heard the words of John they went and followed Jesus reverently, and he turned round and asked them what they would. In reply they asked him where was his abode, for if they might they would fain stay that evening with him. “ Come and see ! ” replied Jesus. And they remained with him the rest of the day, through hours never to be forgotten. Now one of these two was Andrew of Bethsaida, and he went first and found his brother Simon, to tell him the joyful news, “ We have found the Messiah ! ” Then he brought Simon to Jesus, who knew him and penetrated to his very heart as soon as he saw him. “ Thou art Simon,” he said, “ the son of Jona. Thou shalt be called Cephas.”

The next day, before he left Peræa, where all this had taken place, to go to Galilee, Jesus found Philip, a fellow-townsman of Andrew and Peter, and called him to be his follower. Philip, in his turn, went to Nathanael and told him the joyful tidings : “ We have found him of whom the lawgiver and the prophets wrote, Jesus the son of Joseph, of Nazareth.” “ Can any thing good come out of Nazareth ? ” asked Nathanael, in doubt. But, nevertheless, he went with his friend. When Jesus saw him approaching, he said :

¹ See vol. ii. pp. 421, 422.

"This is indeed an Israelite without guile." "Whence dost thou know me?" asked Nathanael, in surprise; on which Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, as you sat under the fig-tree, I saw you;" and at this token of superhuman knowledge, Nathanael cried enthusiastically, "Rabbi! thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!" But Jesus promised him other and more glorious proofs of his greatness: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, you shall see heaven opened and God's angels ascending and descending on the Son of man,"—for Jacob's dream of the immediate and uninterrupted communication between heaven and earth should be realized in the person of Jesus.

Again, in later days, John bore witness to Jesus; for he had now returned with his disciples from Galilee to Judæa where he, or rather they, baptized the people. Now John was also baptizing not far from the same place, and on a certain occasion his disciples came to him and complained that Jesus was drawing all men to him. But John rebuked their complaint; for he had never given himself out as the Christ, but only as his herald, and now he felt nothing but joy in the growing influence of his superior. "He must increase, but I must decrease," he said. The Word made flesh was from heaven, transcended all men, and spoke the words of God. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his power. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but he who rejects him loses that life, and remains under the wrath of God."

Here let us pause for a moment. How completely persons, things, and circumstances are transformed! But throughout our treatment of this Gospel we shall regard it as superfluous to fix attention on the astonishing difference between it and the others, nor should we have stopped at this point except to ask a special question: Who is this Nathanael? He is unknown to us from other sources, and his name never occurs again even in this Gospel, except in the appendix. This is rather strange, for in the description of these first meetings a prominent position is obviously assigned to him; nay, the celebrated declaration of Peter is laid upon his lips, so that he quite overshadows that Apostle.¹ We should certainly have expected to hear more of him. Can he be intended for the disciple whom Jesus loved? Scarcely, for we must probably identify this ideal disciple with the unnamed companion of Andrew, who first came to Jesus in that

¹ See p. 313.

moment never to be forgotten. Nathanael has been variously identified with Matthew, Matthias, and Bartholomew, but on very inadequate grounds, and there is not the smallest necessity to make him one of the Twelve at all. Can he be intended for Paul? Remember that Paul, though an Israelite without guile, was at first completely dominated by his prejudices; that while he still sat under the barren fig-tree of Israel's legal religion he was already singled out by the Lord and chosen to be an Apostle; and lastly that his conversion had been previously brought into connection with the preaching of Philip (the evangelist), in a hostile sense.¹ But after all the question must remain unanswered; and perhaps Nathanael is no historical personage at all, but a free creation of our writer.

What has the disciple whom Jesus loved to tell us of the glory manifested in word and deed by the Son of God?

His first sign, performed at Cana of Galilee, was to turn water into wine; for he gave and gives the life of the spirit in the place of lifeless forms.² His second mighty deed was of like purport, but more aggressive in its character. It was the cleansing of the Temple at Jerusalem on the day of the Jewish Passover.³ This took place after he had made a short stay with relatives and disciples at Capernaum. When the Jews demanded a miracle from him as a proof of his commission, he answered: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews understood the answer literally; and indeed throughout this Gospel almost every one misunderstands Jesus, from a total lack of spiritual perception. Jesus, says the Evangelist, really meant his body by the temple. But we must observe that our author sometimes attaches a double significance to an expression, and that here he means to say that Jesus intended to speak of his own resurrection, and also of the building up of his spiritual body, the community of the faithful, when this Jewish religion has been destroyed by the Jews themselves.

Many of the people of Jerusalem, when they saw his signs, believed in him; but Jesus, who could read the heart, trusted them not. On a certain evening there came a Pharisaic councillor to him, called Nicodemus, and declared his belief in him as a teacher come from God. Jesus said, in response, that no one could enter into the kingdom of God unless he was born from on high, from the spirit. Nicodemus did not in

¹ See pp. 410, 520, 617

² See p. 233.

³ See pp. 365, 366.

the least comprehend him ; but what Jesus was really speaking of was the necessity for carnal man to receive the higher principle of life from above, the life from God. “ God so loved mankind that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever had faith in him might be saved from destruction and possess eternal life. For he was not sent into the world to condemn mankind, but to save them. Whoever has faith in him cannot be condemned ; but whoever has not faith is condemned already by his disbelief in God’s Only-begotten. This is the Messianic judgment : that the Light has come into the world, and that men have chosen darkness rather than light because their works are evil. Every one whose work is evil hates the light and flees from it, because it would rebuke his works. But he who deals truly seeks the light, that his works may be seen to be done in God.”

A counterpart to this interview with the celebrated teacher of Israel is found in a conversation with a Samaritan woman. When the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, Jesus went back from Judæa to Galilee. On his way through Samaria he sat down in the heat of the day, wearied, by Jacob’s well, near Sychar (Shechem), while his disciples went into the city to buy food. Meanwhile there came a woman to draw water ; Jesus asked her to let him drink, and this request, as coming from a Jew, astonished her beyond measure.¹ Then he spoke to her of the living water which he could give ; by which he meant the divine truth which satisfies all the wants of the soul and becomes an active, indestructible principle of life within. The woman no more understood him than Nicodemus had done. So Jesus said she must go and call her husband, — and yet she had no husband. She had had five husbands before, and the one she now had was not her husband. [From this we gather that the woman is a personification of the people of Samaria, which had formerly worshipped five gods and now served the Lord, who was not the real national deity of Samaria but of Israel.] The woman now saw that she was speaking to a prophet, and therefore asked Jesus whether the Samaritans who made Gerizim the true place of worship, or the Jews who made it Jerusalem, were right. He answered that thenceforth it was neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem. The Samaritans indeed were not on a par with the Jews, but the true worship was confined to no place and limited by no external conditions ; for it was

¹ See vol ii. pp. 452 ff.; also pp. 192, 299, 300, of this volume.

spiritual, even as God was spirit. Finally he made himself known as the Christ.

Upon this his disciples returned, and while the woman was gone to the city, eagerly to recount all that had taken place, they offered him food. But he refused. He was too much absorbed in his life-work to eat any thing. This they could not understand ; but he declared that his food was to do the will of Him that sent him and to finish His work. He had sowed seed, and behold the harvest-time had come already. It was the special task of his disciples to gather in the harvest.¹ And in truth it appeared in the course of a two-days' stay in this city that not a few Samaritans believed in him on the strength of what the woman had said, and many more yet when they heard him themselves. And this was what was needed, — not to believe on the authority of another, but to hear and know at first hand that Jesus was in truth the Saviour of mankind.

On the other hand in Galilee, his native place, they only received him because of the signs which the pilgrims of Jerusalem had seen him perform. An officer of Capernaum, whose son was lying on his death-bed, came to him at Cana to implore his aid, and although it grieved Jesus much that any one should believe in him simply because of his miracles and not because of the truth he preached, or his own spiritual greatness, nevertheless he spoke the word of might ; and at that very moment the boy, though lying in bed at eight leagues' distance, was healed.²

These scenes are especially intended to show the nature of true faith.

Jesus went about, bringing to mankind deliverance, truth, and life. But everywhere he was met by spiritual incapacity, by worldliness, by hostility, which swelled at last into murderous violence.

Again there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went to Jerusalem. On a Sabbath day he came to the bath of Bethesda, that is "House of Compassion," near the Sheep-gate. In the five porticoes of this bath there lay a host of afflicted beings, such as the blind, the maimed, the crippled. Now and then the water was stirred from below, and any one who leaped into the bath at that moment was healed. Here Jesus found a man who had been disabled for eight-and-thirty years, and said to him, "Do you wish to be healed?" "Alas!"

¹ See pp. 514 ff.

² See pp. 287, 308, 309.

he answered in despair, “ I have no one to plunge me into the bath when the water bubbles up ; and as I creep on some other is before me.” “ Arise ! take up your bed and walk ! ” cried Jesus, and the sufferer obeyed and was healed. In truth he heals the sick ; he gives power to the spiritually crippled to rise up and walk upon the path of God’s commandments, if only they are not stubborn but have faith in him.

Now when the Jews came upon the restored sufferer, carrying his bed, they rebuked him for breaking the Sabbath. He appealed to the injunction of his benefactor ; but at first he could not tell them who it was. Afterwards Jesus met him in the temple and exhorted him to sin no more. Then the man directed the Jews to Jesus, upon whom all their rage now turned because he had desecrated the day of the Lord ; but Jesus appealed to his Father, who never paused in his works of beneficence on the day of rest. After this they sought to kill him all the more because he had likened himself to God, as his Father. But Jesus went on, untroubled by their rage, and said that every thing he did was after the pattern of his Father’s works and in His might ; even as his Father, so did he too wake life out of death ; nay, the Father had appointed him as judge in order that he might receive from all men the same honor as the Father. John, the Father himself, the Scriptures, — which the Jews regarded with a reverence that was even excessive, — all bore witness to him. In vain ! They were still without faith. Their own Law would itself convince and condemn them of unbelief.

When he had returned to Galilee he fed the multitudes miraculously, and thus showed his power of amply providing for the wants of countless hosts with the scantiest means, and when every one was wholly at a loss.¹ The beholders acknowledged him as the great prophet, and wanted to make him King ; but he withdrew to the mountain, and presently, walking in the night over the stormy waves, he rejoined his disciples, who had crossed in the boat to Capernaum.² Great was the amazement of the people when they found him there. He rebuked them because it was not for the imperishable bread of the soul that they followed him : he was himself the bread of life that had come down from heaven. Now to the Jews he was only the son of Joseph, and therefore they did not believe these words. But none the less were they the truth ; and all who would possess eternal life must take his spirit and his life, must take him, as it were, himself, into

¹ See pp. 148 ff

² See pp. 268, 269.

themselves : and all this is symbolized in the bread and wine eaten at the Lord's Supper. By this discourse many of his disciples, who took every thing literally, were repelled, and therefore they forsook him. Then he said to the Twelve : " You will not forsake me likewise ? " Upon which Peter exclaimed, " Lord ! to whom should we go ? Thou hast words of eternal life, and we believe and know that thou art the Holy One of God." A glorious confession ! But alas ! that one of these chosen ones should be a devil. Jesus knew it and said it, for he recognized his betrayer from the first.

Exposed to murderous attacks in Judæa, Jesus remained in Galilee till the Feast of Tabernacles. His brothers, who did not believe in him, urged him to go to Jerusalem, to show himself to all men. He refused, but subsequently went up secretly. The multitude was much divided in disposition towards him ; and presently when he taught in the temple¹ every one was amazed. No one dared to lay hands upon him, and even the officers of justice sent to seize him returned without doing any thing. But the high priests and Pharisees who had sent them were all the more exasperated, and would not so much as listen to Nicodemus, who raised a feeble protest in his favor.

Meanwhile Jesus went on teaching, promised life to whosoever would receive him, proclaimed himself the light of the world, warned the stubborn of death in their sins, and promised his faithful followers the knowledge of the truth and in it the enjoyment of true moral liberty. " He who commits sin is a slave. If the son make you free, then shall you be free indeed." The Jews were not free, nor were they Abraham's children, for in that case they would do the works of Abraham ; rather were they children of the devil, and that was why they would not listen to the teaching of Jesus, but sought to kill him, though he had come forth from God and was exalted above all men, and delivered his own from death for ever.

Yes ! he was indeed the light of mankind, as he soon proved. When he left the temple, to escape being stoned, he passed a man who had been born blind, and who sat begging. His disciples asked him whether this punishment had come upon the man for his own sins, or for those of his parents. Jesus combated their superstitious idea altogether, and explained that, in the course of his own unwearied labors throughout the whole day of life, this poor sufferer's very in-

¹ See p. 176.

firmity was to become a means of displaying God's redeeming love. Then he made some salve with spittle, anointed the blind man's eyes with it, and ordered him to go and bathe in the pool of Siloam. No sooner had he done so than he gained his sight. His neighbors were filled with amazement, and could not believe their eyes till he told them how it had come about. He was brought before the Pharisees, who renewed their strictures on Jesus for again performing a cure on the Sabbath. The man's parents were now summoned; but, since they knew the authorities had determined to lay any one who acknowledged Jesus as the Christ under the ban of the synagogue, they would commit themselves to nothing beyond the statement that their son was born blind, and would give no opinion as to how he had been healed. On this the man himself was examined again; but, however hard they pressed him, he continued stoutly to maintain that his benefactor was a prophet sent by God, whereupon he was cast out with contumely. When Jesus heard of this he went and found him, and asked: "Do you believe in the Son of God?" "Lord! do but tell me who he is, and I am ready," answered he. Then Jesus made himself known, and received his homage. Such, then, is the result of his labors: by the light which he makes arise in the moral world the simple and the ignorant have their eyes opened to the truth,—to the highest good of man; but the learned and the wise reject his guidance in their self-conceit, and so become blind to the truth, and cast out those that Jesus has delivered!

Jesus is the good shepherd. His sheep, the children of God, listen to his voice, follow him, are saved and blessed with abundance of all things needful to them. Israel's leaders on the other hand are all thieves and robbers, or at best faithless hirelings, who flee from the beasts of prey and leave the flock to its fate. The good shepherd offers up his life for his flock; and Jesus offers up his life for his own, whether Israelites or heathen, who must all be one flock under one shepherd. And if he offers himself up for them, that same moral force which enables him to surrender his life gives him power also to seize the higher life even out of death.

Again, in the temple, at the Feast of Lights,¹ after the unbelievers had taunted him in vain, he spoke of his care for the sheep which no power in the world could pluck out of his own or his Father's hand, for he and the Father were one. For this saying the Jews were ready to stone him as a blas-

¹ See vol. ii. pp. 565, 566.

phemer. But Jesus showed them there was no blasphemy in his words, and shielded himself from their violence by retreating into the Transjordanic regions, where many who were mindful of the preaching of John believed in him.

The conflict had now reached such a point that the crisis could not be long delayed. Let us see what brought it about.

At Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, lived a brother and two sisters who were very dear to Jesus. They were Lazarus, Mary, who anointed the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair, and Martha.¹ It was from the sisters that Jesus heard, while still in Perea, that his friend Lazarus was ill. "This sickness will not result in death, but in the glorifying of God in His Son," said Jesus, and stayed two days where he was. Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go to Judaea again!" They were afraid of his being stoned by the Jews; but he told them that if the duration of each one's day of life is unalterably fixed, he who treads his path by the daylight of truth has nought to fear. He only who walks in the night of sin need fear. He told them also that Lazarus slept the sleep of death, from which he was about to wake him to increase their faith. "Let us go too," said Thomas, "and die with our Master."

When they reached Bethany Lazarus had already been buried four days, and many Jews of Jerusalem had come to condole with the sisters. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went and met him outside the village. "O my Lord!" she cried, "hadst thou been here my brother would not have died. But, even now, I know that God will grant whatever thou mayest ask Him." "Your brother shall rise again," answered Jesus. "Yes, on the last day!" sobbed Martha. But Jesus meant something very different. "I am the resurrection and the life," he went on, "and whosoever believes in me, though he be dead, shall yet live; and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Then Martha confessed him to be the Son of God, and went away to call out Mary secretly. Mary rose at once, and her visitors, who thought she was going to the grave, followed her. She threw herself down before Jesus with the same expostulation which her sister had made. When he saw all these mourners Jesus was deeply moved, and asked for the tomb. "Come and see it, Lord," they answered. Jesus wept. "Roll away the stone," he said, when he stood beside the tomb.² "Lord! the body is already

¹ See pp. 387, 388, 405, 406, 186, 187, 205, 206.

² See pp. 459, 460, 473.

decaying," objected Martha; but Jesus rebuked her want of faith, and after thanking God aloud, in order that the bystanders might have faith in his divine mission, he uttered the word of might, " Lazarus, come forth!" And immediately he came forth, with his hands and feet and face swathed in the burial clothes. Jesus ordered them to unwrap the shroud and free him. [This was the culmination of his miraculous power,¹ and shows in a symbol of overwhelming force how, as he said to Martha, he gives eternal life to all who believe in him; how he can make man rise from the death of sin, from a moral corruption that is even far advanced, into that truth of life which develops ever more and more gloriously, and never has an end.]

Many of the Jews who witnessed this event believed in him, but others went and told it to the Pharisees, who at once took counsel with the high priests. They knew not what to do. If they let the wonder-worker go his way every one would believe in him, and then Roman intervention would give things a fatal turn. Caiaphas therefore said, "It is better that one man should die for all than that the nation should perish." Thus did he prophesy, as high priest for that year, that Jesus would die for the people; nay, for the children of God among the heathen also. From this day forward they sought to seize Jesus and put him to death. But he withdrew into the city of Ephraim.

On Monday, six days before the Passover, he was again at Bethany, where a meal was provided in his honor at which Martha acted as hostess. Lazarus was one of the guests, and Mary showed her gratitude by anointing the feet of Jesus with spikenard. Thereupon Judas, who held the purse and was a thief, reproved her for waste, but Jesus defended her.² Many of the Jews came there to see Jesus and Lazarus, and the authorities perceived that decisive measures must be taken. The next day he rode into Jerusalem upon an ass,³ amidst the acclamations of the pilgrims who hailed him as the King of Israel, and the multitude who greeted him as the raiser of Lazarus. There were certain Greeks in Jerusalem who asked Philip to give them access to Jesus, and Jesus took this as the foreshadowing of the glory that would be his from the faith of the heathen world resulting from his death. Just as the grain of corn must rot in the earth before it can live again in the heavy-laden ear, so would his death also

¹ See p. 287.

² See pp. 360, ff.

² See pp. 405, 406, 206.

yield a rich harvest. Self-seeking is self-slaying, but to lose the life is to preserve it.¹ Then for a moment Jesus was perturbed in spirit, but a voice from heaven, uttered for the sake of the people, announced that his prayer that God should be glorified was heard. Henceforth Satan was bereft of his power over mankind, and Jesus would draw all men to himself in his exaltation on the cross, his exaltation to God.

On this and the following days he concealed himself because of the stubborn unbelief of the Jews; even those of the chief people who secretly adhered to him dared not openly confess it. Yet, whosoever beheld Jesus beheld Him who sent him; and whosoever rejected him would one day be condemned,—not by him, for he had only come to save mankind, but by the words which he had uttered.

On Thursday evening Jesus had lain down to meat with his disciples for the last time before he should go to the Father.² It was not the Paschal meal. The Passover did not begin until the following evening; for he himself who was the true Paschal lamb, and as such made an end of all sacrifices,³ must be put to death at the very day and hour ordained for the slaughter of the lamb,—not twenty-four hours later as the Synoptic Gospels say. The betrayal by Judas was already determined by the devil. But the love of Jesus for his friends was now to reach its culmination. He rose from the table, in full consciousness of his absolute supremacy and his divine origin and destiny, laid aside his upper garment, girt himself with a linen towel, poured some water into the basin, and washed his disciples' feet. When it came to Peter's turn he remonstrated, for he did not understand what it meant. So Jesus said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part in me;" upon which Peter begged him to wash his hands and his head also, but Jesus would not, for it was not needful. And now they were entirely pure,—all but one. For by thus washing their feet, and setting forth symbolically in this servile office his ministering love for them, Jesus also meant to indicate the cleansing power of his suffering and death; for it would purify them, and all who like them were even now redeemed and cleansed by fellowship with Jesus, from the last stains of sin which still as it were clung to their feet from their contact with a corrupted world.

When he had finished washing their feet, and had resumed his outer garment and taken his place again at the table, he

¹ See p. 330.

² See 1 Corinthians v. 7, and p. 649.

² See pp. 407 ff.

exhorted them all to take to heart the example which he, their Lord and Master, had given them, and to serve and cleanse one another in humble love.¹ But alas! there was one traitor lurking among them! When Jesus said this, the disciple whom he loved, and who lay next to him at table, turned his head on the Lord's bosom, at a sign from Peter, and asked him secretly who the betrayer was. The Lord indicated Judas by a covert sign, and then told Judas himself to make haste. The others thought he was telling him, as the purse-bearer, to buy something for the approaching Passover, or give something to the poor; and so the betrayer withdrew in the darkness of the night. Then Jesus spoke of being glorified and of going away to a place whither they should follow him afterwards; and he gave them the new commandment of Christian brotherly love, according to his own example: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another."

What follows next in the Fourth Gospel can hardly be given in a summary. It must be read in its entirety. It consists of a moving series of farewell exhortations and a not less moving prayer for the disciples.² It is here that this testimony of faith in Jesus meets us in the fulness of its power and its unsurpassed beauty. Here we learn what the beloved disciple, who shared the spirit of the Master, found in him, — the only way to the Father, the divine truth and the higher life in very person, the living image of the Father. We learn how he regarded his death, — as the entrance upon the glory which had been laid up for him, as the preparation of a place for his loved ones in the Father's house, as the indispensable condition of the coming of the Spirit of truth, of the full and independent growth in spirit of his disciples. We learn the enduring relationship in which he stands to Jesus; it is as his disciple that he henceforth prays to God; it is in his power and by sharing his life that he bears fruit, like a branch that is part of the vine; and he it is who comes back to his friends, in the Spirit of truth, and abides with them. We learn what he owes to Jesus, — untroubled peace of soul, courage to bear witness to the Christ in spite of the hatred and persecution of the world, childlike communion with the Father without advocate or mediator, confidence in victory throughout every conflict. We learn the great purpose of the work of Jesus, — to glorify the Father by the higher revelation of Him brought to mankind; to sanctify all the

¹ See p. 414.

² John xiv.-xvii.

children of God by this truth, and to bind them by the most exalted love to one another, to their Saviour, and to their Father, thus making them share the eternal glory of the Son and bringing all mankind to acknowledge his mission. This, and far more than this, finds full and beauteous expression in these chapters. From first to last they are pervaded by a tone to which the strings of our hearts vibrate in harmonious response. It is the tone of a faith which has left the ancient contradictions far behind, or rather far below it, entering into a new world which has opened out before it, and in which it rests in full contentment as in its proper home. It is the tone of a hope which no longer feels or fears the ancient disappointment, for the very reason that it reaches out towards a purely spiritual redemption, which has already gained its provisional fulfilment now, and goes to meet the future with a joyous confidence. In a word, it is here more than anywhere else that we find the inward peace, the unshaken trust, the beauteous harmony of that Christian mind that comes so freely and proudly forth; of that Christian society that is taking shape, as it were, before our very eyes.

In conclusion, let us glance at the account of the glorification of Jesus in suffering, in death, in resurrection!

Accompanied by his disciples Jesus left the city, crossed the brook of Kidron, and entered a garden.¹ It was not because his soul was dismayed, for that was impossible. It was not to seek for strength in prayer, for that was not needful. But this was the usual place of meeting, and was well known as such to Judas, who soon came there with Roman soldiers and Jewish retainers, carrying lanterns and torches. Jesus was not betrayed by a kiss as though he were a victim, but he surrendered himself up freely, stepping forward to meet the band and saying, "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth;" and when Jesus said, "I am he!" they fell down upon the earth. Jesus, on his side, took care to provide for the unmolested departure of his disciples, and rebuked Peter, who had cut off the right ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Should he not drink the cup of suffering which his Father gave him?

He was carried in bonds first to Annas, then to Caiaphas.² While Peter denied him, as he had foretold, he was being tried. When questioned as to his followers and his teaching, he referred to his hearers for an answer, saying that he had

¹ See pp. 419 ff.

² See pp. 423 ff.

never taught in secret, but had spoken freely in synagogue and temple. For that answer one of the attendants struck him in the face, but the quiet rebuke of Jesus was as calm and gentle as ever.

Early in the morning he was taken from Caiaphas to the palace of the governor.¹ The accusers remained outside for fear of becoming unclean and unfit to eat the Passover in the evening, by treading the floor of the heathen. So Pilate came out to them and asked of what they accused the prisoner. But they abruptly and haughtily declined to set the accusation forth. So Pilate of course said that in that case they must judge the prisoner themselves in accordance with their own Law, and that he had nothing more to do with the matter. But they urged that the right of judging in cases of life and death had been taken away from them.

Then the governor went in again, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" But Jesus put him to shame by answering, "Have you or your subordinates ever seen it?" "Am I a Jew, then?" retorted Pilate proudly. "Your own people and the high priests have given you up to me. What is it you have done?" "My kingdom is not of this world [such was the lofty declaration of the Lord!] or else my servants would resist my surrender to the Jews by force of arms. But my kingdom is of a higher than earthly rank." "Then you are a king after all?" answered the other. "It is as you say," replied Jesus. "But for this end came I into the world, to bring the truth to light. Whoever is a child of the truth listens to me." "What is truth?" said Pilate; and with this sceptic's question on his lips he turned away to go to the Jews again. "I cannot find that he is guilty of any thing," he said. "But you have a custom for me to release a prisoner for you at the Passover. Shall it be the King of the Jews?" "Not him, but Barabbas!" shouted they. Now Barabbas was a robber.

When Jesus had been scourged and mocked, Pilate made another attempt to move the Jews. He declared once more that Jesus was innocent, brought him out with the crown of thorns on his temples and the purple robe on his shoulders, and cried, "Behold the man!"—as much as to say, "There! look at your unhappy victim!" "Crucify him, crucify him!" shrieked the high priests and their retainers. "Then do it yourselves, if you can and dare; for I will not be driven into it," answered Pilate angrily. "Our Law condemns him

¹ See pp. 437 ff.

to death, for he has declared himself to be God's son," cried they, stating the real ground of accusation at last. "Son of a god!" thought Pilate, "I must look into that." So he went back and said to Jesus, "In very truth whence art thou?" There was no reply. The irritated governor burst into a passion, but the calm and lofty bearing of Jesus brought him to himself again. Indeed he would have set him at liberty there and then, had he not been restrained by an implied threat of the Jews that they would accuse him before the Emperor of siding with rioters. It was towards noon when at last he put himself in the seat of judgment, and after a last feeble protest condemned Jesus to the cross.

So he was led out to Golgotha and crucified between two others.¹ The high priests protested against the superscription, but in vain. It ran: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," and was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. In this last language the initial letters would be I. N. R. I.; and this is why we see these letters above the cross in pictures. The soldiers divided his upper garments by tearing them into four shares; but his under garment was woven in a single piece without a seam, like that of the priests; so for it they cast lots. Thus was the Scripture literally fulfilled.² By the cross were standing the mother of Jesus, her sister Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Now when Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved near to her, he conferred upon him the lofty task of taking his place as her son. "Woman," he said to his mother, "behold your son!" and to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" From that time forth the disciple took her to his home. Thus by the last expression of his will did the Christ command and intrust his mother—that is the community—to his beloved disciple, passing over all the others.³ Knowing that all the predictions of the Scripture were now fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." A sponge was dipped into some vinegar that stood there and put to his lips on a stick of hyssop. He took the refreshing draught, cried out, "Finished!" bowed down his head and gave up the ghost.

Now the coming Sabbath was also the first day of the Passover, and was therefore specially sacred; and for this reason the Jews wished the bodies to be taken down beforehand, and obtained the governor's consent that it should be so.⁴ In such a case the criminals must have their legs broken

¹ See pp. 447 ff.

² See pp. 233, 667.

³ See vol. ii. p. 310.

⁴ Deuteronomy xxi. 22, 23.

with a crowbar, and must then be dispatched. This was accordingly done to the two malefactors, but not to Jesus, for he was dead already. He was the true Paschal lamb, and no bone of his must be broken,—for so the Scripture ordained.¹ But one of the soldiers (again in accordance with Scripture²) ran a spear into his side and there flowed out blood and water,—the symbol of the atonement by his death and the purification by his spirit. Such is the veriest truth concerning the suffering on the cross, made manifest by him who has seen it and experienced it, for the strengthening of the faith of the Christians!

Presently Joseph of Arimathea was assisted in the burial by Nicodemus, who brought a hundred pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes. The body was carefully swathed in cloths, together with these strong spices, according to Jewish custom, and then was taken to a garden, close by the place of execution, and laid in a tomb that had never before been used. The place was chosen because it was so near, and the approach of the Sabbath made it needful to hasten.

But this was not the end.³ On Sunday morning, while it was yet dark, Mary Magdalene went to the garden. There she saw the stone rolled away from the cave, and perceived at once that the grave was empty. She hurried with the sad news to Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved. At once they both hastened to the spot. Peter was the last to reach it, but the first to enter the tomb, where he found the swathing bands and the napkin for the head laid there clean and in due order. When the other saw this he had faith, even before the Christ had appeared to any one. Then they went back again.

Meanwhile Mary stayed weeping at the grave. But when she bent down to cast a glance at the deserted resting-place, she saw through her tears that an angel was sitting where the head had lain, and another where the feet had been. And the words fell upon her ear: “Woman! why dost thou weep?” “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him,” she sobbed as she turned away. And there stood Jesus himself by her side, but she knew him not, and thought he was the keeper of the garden. “Woman! why dost thou weep? Whom dost thou seek?” he asked. “Ah, sir!” she cried, “if you have borne him away, do but tell me where, and I will take him.” Then

¹ Exodus xii. 46; Numbers ix. 12.

² See pp. 462 ff.

³ Zechariah xii. 10.

she heard that never-forgotten voice exclaim: "Mary!" "My Master!" she exclaimed in transport, and turned to embrace his knees. But he said: "Touch me not; for though I have not yet ascended, tell my brothers that even now I ascend to my Father and their Father, to my God and theirs." Mary understood him. The personal relations of bygone days had come to an end. She went and told the disciples what had happened and what the Lord had said.

That Sunday evening as they were together, with doors closed for fear of the Jews, Jesus suddenly stood among them. "Peace be to you!" he said; and, to remove the possibility of doubt, he showed them the marks of the nails and the spear in his hands and side. Then he committed to them his own mission,—the task which God had given him,—breathed the Holy Spirit upon them and gave them power to forgive sins.

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with them that evening; and when the others told him that they had seen the Lord, he said he would never believe it unless convinced by seeing and touching with his own eyes and hands. His demand was met. A week afterwards they were together in the same room,—Thomas with them this time,—and Jesus was again in the midst of them, though the doors were shut. He gave them his greeting of peace; and, knowing all things, he asked Thomas to put his finger in the wounds of the nails, and his hand into his side, and then to renounce his unbelief. Convinced that his Master was indeed glorified, Thomas now cried, "My Lord and my God!" "Because thou seest me, thou believest," said Jesus; "but blessed are they who see not and yet believe!" Yes! That is the true faith, which he demands and has a right to demand,—the faith which, without any material sign, recognizes and confesses him as the Prince of Life, who has and who gives eternal life.

Jesus did many other signs also before the eyes of his disciples; but those which have now been mentioned are recorded so that every one who reads this Gospel may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and on the strength of that faith may have life eternal in Him who transcends all praise.

The purpose, then, of the disciple whom Jesus loved, in bearing his testimony, was to communicate and strengthen the faith that wakes to life. It was for this purpose that he strove to open out to others the treasures of divine grace and

truth which he himself had found in the Christ; so that every one, without any outward sign, simply on the ground of the glory and the wealth of His spirit, might receive him for His own sake. Beyond question the disciple has accomplished this purpose in thousands of lives, and his "spiritual Gospel" has won thousands of hearts for the Christ.

As we close his work, therefore, and ask, "Has he any right to the title he gives himself of the friend who shared the spirit of Jesus?" we cannot hesitate to answer in the affirmative. His right is unquestionable. Better than any of the early messengers of Christ did he perceive and teach the power and worth of Christianity as the new principle of human life. His name remains unknown, and we cannot therefore so much as look for the traces of his personal influence. In this respect, accordingly, we cannot bring him into comparison with Paul, or with any of those others of whom he makes Christ declare, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever believes in me, the works which I do shall he do also; and yet greater works shall he do, for I go to the Father."¹ But in religious genius he transcends them all by the lofty flight of his spirit, by the depth of his feeling, and by his exaltation above the strife and the disappointment of the apostolic age.

It is quite another question whether the author of the appendix is right in assigning to the disciple whom Jesus loved the spiritual guidance of Christianity through the whole course of the ages. To this question we must emphatically answer "No!" Not even this disciple fully understood and appreciated the Master. Not even he exhausted the treasures which are offered to us in the life and the gospel of Jesus. When we place even him by the side of the Master, we see how far he has fallen short of his task. Not even he, therefore, can "abide." It is not only that the form in which he presents his thoughts and experiences is too closely connected with the philosophy of his age to be permanently available; but his weaknesses are also apparent in the substance of his work, and especially in his conception of the world of man as divided into the children of God and the children of the devil.

Jesus made no such separation. Even in those who had strayed farthest, who had sunk deepest, who had become most shamelessly corrupt, he still beheld the very sons and daughters of God,—lost indeed but not past finding again,

¹ John xiv. 12.

degenerate but not past raising up, dead but not past recalling to life. His gospel of God's love even to the most insignificant, and of the indestructible worth of man, is the great truth which is destined to reform the world, to sanctify and perfect society, to contend against, mitigate, or remove all moral and social misery, to realize the conception of the kingdom of God. The inexhaustible wealth and depth of that principle of the right, the worth, the destiny of every several man as a child of the heavenly Father is the legacy of Jesus to us and to succeeding generations. In our personal life and social work it gives us the light of truth ; it gives us strength for the battle ; it brings us the encouragement of hope, the secret of elastic power, the pledge of triumph. With that gospel, made flesh as it were in his person, Jesus still guides the development of humanity, and will continue to guide it until he has inspired all his brothers with the full consciousness of their divine origin and destiny, — and then, to borrow Paul's beautiful description of the future, he will give up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.¹

And this has been strikingly portrayed as the course of history by the author of the Fourth Gospel himself, when he puts upon the lips of the departing Christ this declaration to his disciples : “ I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Yet when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the whole truth, and will teach you to understand how the Kingdom of God must yet develop itself on earth. He will glorify me, for *he will take from my treasure to give to you.* All that the Father has is mine.”²

The disciple whom Jesus loved, however, has reached a point of development which not only stands out from that of the old Catholic Church as the ideal over against a miserably defective reality, but also far transcends any thing which the Christianity of to-day as a whole has as yet attained to ; and within the New Testament the Fourth Gospel must be regarded as the ripest and fairest fruit of the spirit of Jesus.

The first epistle of John soon issued from the same school in imitation of the Gospel. Listen to the testimony it bears : “ See how great love the Father has shown us, that we should be called and should be the children of God ! We shall at last be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Whosoever cherishes this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure. For this is love of God, to keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not hard. And as for us, we know that

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 24, 28.

² John xvi. 12-15a.

we have passed from death to life, because we love the brothers.”¹ These words, it is true, are not uttered by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, but they are very certainly from the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” And now if we would hear in this disciple’s words, as the best interpretation of the Master’s spirit, the main contents of the Christian faith in God, let us listen to three sayings, the most beautiful and noble with which we can close our “Bible for Learners.”² May they be to our readers like so many dear and trusted load-stars to guide them on the way of life!

“The hour cometh, and now is, when the truly devout shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such are the worshippers the Father seeks. GOD IS SPIRIT, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

“This is the message brought to us through the Christ, and to you through us, that GOD IS LIGHT, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we are liars. But if we walk in the light, like as he is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another.”

“Let us love one another; for love is from God, and he who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who loves not knows not God at all, for GOD IS LOVE. He who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”

Blessed is he whose heart receives this truth, whose life sets a seal upon it! God is Spirit! God is Light! God is Love! And, from the bottom of our hearts, we wish that blessing to each one of our readers!

¹ 1 John iii. 1a, 2b, 3, 14, v. 3.

² John iv. 23, 24; 1 John i. 5-7a, iv. 7, 8, 16b.

CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY.

CHRONOLOGY

OF

ISRAEL.

B.C.

- About 1320. The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.
- About 1260. Settlement of the Israelites in Canaan.
Period of the Judges.
Samuel. Schools of the Prophets.
Saul's reign.
- About 1058-1018. David's reign.
- About 1018-978. Solomon's reign.
- 978.¹ Separation of the Two Kingdoms.

JUDA.

- 978. Rehoboam.
- 957. Abijah.
- 955. Asa.
- 914. Jehoshaphat
- 889. Jehoram *m.*
Athaliah,
daughter
of Ahab.
- 884. Ahaziah.
- 884. Athaliah.
- 878. Joash.
- 838. Amaziah.
Joash conquers Juda.

ISRAEL.

- 978. Jeroboam.
- 954. Nadab.
- 953. Baasha.
- 930. Elah.
- Zimri.
- 924. Omri. Samaria becomes the royal residence.
- 918. Ahab.
The Prophet Elijah.
- 897. Ahaziah.
- 896. Jehoram.
The Prophet Elisha.
- 884. Jehu.
- 856. Jehoahaz
- 840. Joash.

PEOPLES STANDING IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL.

Between 1280 and 1260 B.C. Expeditions of Ramses III. against Canaan.

Hiram, king of Tyre.

Shishak, king of Egypt.

Benhadad I., king of Syria.

Benhadad II., king of Syria.
Mesha, king of Moab.

Hazaël, king of Syria.

Benhadad III., king of Syria.

¹ All the dates in the history of Juda and Israel, from Solomon to the battle of Carchesium (605), must be regarded as merely approximate.

CHRONOLOGY

OF

OTHER PEOPLES.

B.C.

About 1100. The return of the Heraclidæ.

1068. Codrus. The last king of Athens.

Lycurgus in Sparta.

Carthage founded.

ISRAELITE LITERATURE.

The “Decalogue” (Ten Commandments.)?

Song of Deborah (Judges v.).

David’s poems (2 Sam. i. 19–27
and iii. 33, 34.)
Genesis xlix.

The “Book of the Covenant”
(Exodus xxi. 1—xxiii. 19.).

ISRAEL.		PEOPLES STANDING IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL.
JUDA.	ISRAEL.	B.C.
B.C.	B.C.	
	823. Jeroboam II. Most flour- ishing pe- riod of the kingdom.	
809. Uzziah.	770. Zachariah. 771. Shallum. 771. Menahem. Israel made tributary to Syria. 760. Pekahiah. 758. Pekah. First depor- tation to Assyria.	770. Pul, king of Assyria.
758. Jotham. 741. Ahaz. Judah made tributary to Assyria.		740. Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria. Rezin, king of Syria.
	729. Hoshea.	
725. Hezekiah.		726-721. Shalmaneser, king of As- syria.
Reformation in Judah.	719. Fall of the kingdom of Israel.	721-704. Sargon, king of Assyria
712. The Assyrians in Judah.		704-681. Sennacherib, king of As- syria.
699. Manasseh, king of Judah.		692-666. Tirhakah, king of Egypt.
Assyrian colonists in Israel.		681-667. Esarhaddon, king of As- syria.
644. Amon.		666-656. Dodecharchy in Egypt.
		666-612. Psammetichus I., king of Egypt.
643. Josiah.		647-625. Sardanapalus, king of As- syria.
626. Religious reformation. Idol- atry rooted out in Judah, and even in Israel.		612-596. Necho II., king of Egypt.
609. Battle of Megiddo.		
609. Jehoahaz.		
608. ¹ Jehoiakim ascends the throne as the vassal of Egypt.		605. Battle of Carchesium.
598. Jehoiakin.		604-562. Nebuchadrezzar.
597. First deportation by the Chal- dees.		
Zedekiah.		585. Nebuchadrezzar besieges Tyre.
586. Jerusalem and the Temple de- vastated.		

¹ All the dates in the history of Juda and Israel, from Solomon to the battle of Carchesium (605), must be regarded as merely approximate.

OTHER PEOPLES.

B.C.

About 800 (?) the religion of Zarathustra rises in Bactria.
776. First Olympiad.

753. Foundation of Rome.

715. Numa Pompilius, king of Rome.

636-546. Thales.
620. Draco in Athens.

616. Tarquinius Priscus, king of Rome.

604. Lao-tze born.

594. Solon in Athens.

ISRAELITE LITERATURE.

ASSYRIAN PERIOD.

Psalm xlv., Deuteronomy xxxiii., Numbers xxii.-xxiv., Amos, Hosea, Zachariah ix.-xi. Prophetic narratives in the Pentateuch. Narratives in Judges and Samuel. Song of Solomon.

Deuteronomy xxxiii.

Michah, Isaiah.

Collection of Proverbs begun (xxv.-xxix.)

Exodus xxxii. (in part).

Deuteronomy.

CHALDEAN PERIOD.
Nahum, Zephaniah, Zachariah xii. xiv., Habakkuk.

Jeremiah. Many of the Psalms.

ISRAEL.	PEOPLES STANDING IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL.
B.C.	B.C.
586. Second deportation. Gedaliah, governor of Judah.	
582. Gedaliah murdered. Jeremiah carried to Egypt.	
582. Third deportation to Babylonia.	559. Revolt of Cyrus against Astyages.
538. Return of the Jews under Zerubbabel.	530–522. Cambyses.
519. Second Temple completed.	525. Egypt conquered by the Persians.
458. Ezra reaches Palestine with several thousand of the exiles.	521–485. Darius Hystaspis.
445. Nehemiah, governor of the Jews.	485–465. Xerxes.
444. Introduction of the Mosaic Law.	465–424. Artaxerxes Longimanus.
414? Nehemiah arrives in Palestine for the second time.	424–405. Darius Nothus.
About 332. Palestine becomes subject to Alexander the Great. Jaddua, high priest.	405–359. Artaxerxes II. (Mnemon).
320. Ptolemy takes Jerusalem.	374. Defeat of Pharnabazus.
314. Antigonus conquers Palestine and Phoenicia.	359–338. Artaxerxes III. (Ochus).
301. Palestine falls back into the power of Ptolemy.	350. Sidon laid waste.
About 285. Death of the high priest Simon I.	336–330. Darius Codomannus, last king of Persia.
285–265. Eleazar, high priest. Wars between Egypt and Syria. Antigonus of Socho.	336. Alexander, king of Macedon
265–240. Manasseh, high priest.	333. Battle of Issus.
	323. Death of Alexander the Great.
	KINGS OF EGYPT. SYRIA.
Ptolemy I., Lagi (till 285).	Seleucus I., Nicator (till 280).
285–247. Ptolemy II., Philadelphus.	280–261. Antiochus I., Soter.
	261–246. Antiochus II., Theo

OTHER PEOPLES.

B.C.

580-500. Pythagoras.
 370-500. Anaximenes.
 560. Crœsus in Lydia. Peisistratus
 in Athens.
 550-478. Confucius.
 534. Tarquinius Superbus, king of
 Rome.
 510. Expulsion of the Tarquins.
 500. Heraclitus.
 500-428. Anaxagoras.
 490. Battle of Marathon.
 480. Battle of Salamis.
 484-408. Herodotus. Age of Peri-
 cles (died 429). Phidias,
 Sophocles.
 460-370. Democritus.
 469-399. Socrates.
 431-404. Peloponnesian war.
 429-348. Plato, Xenophon.
 388. Death of Buddha.
 385-322. Aristotle, Demosthenes.
 360. Philip, king of Macedon.

ISRAELITE LITERATURE

Earliest edition of Joshua, Judges,
 Samuel, Kings, Lamentations,
 Psalms xiv. (lili.), cxxxvii., xc.,
 &c., Obadiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah xl.-
 lxvi., xiv. 4-21, xxxv., &c. Jere-
 miah li., lli.

PERSIAN PERIOD.

Haggai. Zechariah i.—ix. Joel.
 Book of Origins. Many of the
 priestly laws in Leviticus and
 Numbers.
 Ruth. Jonah.

Malachi. Job. Many of the Psalms
 and Proverbs.

GREEK PERIOD.

Final Edition of the Pentateuch
 and Joshua. Chronicles. Ezra.
 Nehemiah.

264-241. First Punic War

ISRAEL.		PEOPLES STANDING IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL.
B.C.	B.C.	
		KINGS OF EGYPT. — SYRIA.
240-225. Joseph ben Tobias farms the revenues of Palestine.		247-222. Ptolemy III., Euergetes.
240-225. Onias II., high priest.		246-226. Seleucus II., Callinicus.
225-195. Simon II., high priest.		226-223. Seleucus III., Ceraunos.
218. Antiochus the Great conquers Palestine.		223-187. Antiochus III., the Great.
217. Palestine subject to Egypt.		203. Battle of Paneas.
203. Antiochus reconquers Palestine.		202-181. Ptolemy V., Epiphanes.
198. War in Palestine between Egypt and Syria.		187-175. Seleucus V., Philopater.
195-175. Onias III., high priest.		181-146. Ptolemy VI., Philometer
182-175. Hyrcanus ben Joseph.		175-164. Antiochus IV., Epiphanes.
175. Jason buys the high priesthood.		170. War between Syria and Egypt. Battle of Pelusium.
Theatrical performances in Jerusalem.		
174. Antiochus IV. at Jerusalem.		
172. Menelaus, high priest.		
168. Jerusalem taken by Antiochus.		
167. (25 Chislev.) Temple service at Jerusalem suspended.		170-117. Ptolemy VII., Euergetes II., Physcon.
166. Revolt of Mattathias and his sons. Defeat of Apollonius.		164-162. Antiochus V., Eupator.
164. (25 Chislev.) Temple service restored.		162-150. Demetrius I., Soter.
162. Judas defeats Nicanor.		About 160. Temple at On established.
161. Death of Judas.		
Jose ben Joezer and Jose ben Jochanan.		
159. Death of the high priest Alcimus.		
Jonathan, leader of the people.		135-145. Alexander Balas.
152. Jonathan, high priest.		145-140 and 131-127. Demetrius II.
143. Jonathan captured by Tryphon and soon afterwards murdered.		145-148. Antiochus VI.
Simon, high priest.		140-131. Antiochus VII., Sidetes.
142. Judaea becomes independent.		
141. Capture of Gezer and the citadel at Jerusalem.		
135. Simon murdered.		

OTHER PEOPLES.

B.C.

218-201. Second Punic War. Battle of Zama.

193-190. Antiochus III. at war with Rome.

193. Antiochus defeated at Magnesia.

149 Third Punic War.
 148. Macedon becomes a Roman province.
 146 Carthage and Corinth sacked.

ISRAELITE LITERATURE.

Esther.

Many of the Psalms.

Translation of the Law of Moses into Greek.

The proverbs of Jesus ben Sirach.

Ecclesiastes.

Book of Daniel. Psalms xliv,
lxxiv., cxviii., and others.

Baruch. The Epistle of Jeremiah

ISRAEL.	PEOPLES STANDING IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL B.C.
B.C.	
135-105. John Hyrcanus, high priest and prince of the Jews.	
120. Temple on Gerizim destroyed.	
110. Samaria taken by the Jews.	
106-105. Aristobulus, high priest and king.	
105-78. Alexander Jannæus, high priest and king.	
96. Gaza taken.	
85-82. Alexander wages war beyond the Jordan.	
78-69. Alexandra Salome, queen.	
Hyrcanus, high priest.	
Juda ben Tabbai and Simeon ben Setah.	
69. Aristobulus expels Hyrcanus and becomes high priest and king.	
66. War between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus.	
64. Scaurus at Damascus.	
63. Pompey at Damascus.	
61. Pompey takes Jerusalem.	
Hyrcanus II., high priest and ethnarch.	
57-55. Revolt in Judæa.	
54. Crassus plunders the Temple.	
47. Aristobulus poisoned at Rome.	
Hyrcanus II. recognized by Caesar as ethnarch of Judæa. Antipater, procurator of Judæa. Herod, governor of Galilee.	
Shemaiah and Abtalion.	
42. Herod enters Jerusalem in triumph.	
40-37. Antigonus ascends the throne by the aid of the Parthians.	
40. The Roman Senate nominates Herod king.	
37. Jerusalem taken by Herod. Hillel and Shammai.	
24. Boethus, the Alexandrian, high priest.	
19-10. Erection of Herod's temple.	
15. Agrippa at Jerusalem.	
10. Completion of Cæsarea by Herod.	
4. Death of Herod. War of Varus.	
	113-95. Antiochus Cyzicenus.
	66. Pompey in Asia.
	64. Syria becomes a Roman province.
	57-55. Gabinius, governor of Syria.
	54-53. Crassus, governor of Syria.
	47-46. Sextus Cæsar, governor of Syria.
	44-42. Syria under Cassius.
	40. The Parthians in Syria.
	31. Battle of Actium.
	31 B.C.-14 A.D. Augustus, emperor.
	23-13. Agrippa, imperial legate in Asia.

OTHER PEOPLES.

B.C.

133-120. The Gracchi at Rome.

84. End of the Mithridatic war
82. Sulla, dictator

68. Conspiracy of Catiline.

58-50. Cæsar's campaigns in Gaul.
49. Cæsar crosses the Rubicon.
48. Battle of Pharsalia. Death of Pompey.

44 (March 15). Death of Cæsar.

42. Battle of Philippi.

41. Second Triumvirate. Antony obtains the East.

ISRAELITE LITERATURE.

Sibylline Oracles, iii. 97-807.
132. Proverbs of Jesus Sirach
translated into Greek.
Oldest portions of book of Enoch.

About 106. I. Maccabees. Soon afterwards II. Maccabees.

Additions to Esther. Tobit.
Prayer of Manasseh.

ROMAN PERIOD.

Psalms of Solomon.

ISRAEL.

B.C.

4. Archelaus, ethnarch of Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa. Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa. Philip, tetrarch of the northern district, east of the Jordan.

A.D.

6. Archelaus banished. Judæa incorporated in Syria. Quirinus holds a census. Coponius, procurator of Judæa. Revolt of Judas the Galilæan. 9-12. Marcus Ambivius, procurator. 12-15. Annius Rufus, procurator. 15-26. Valerius Gratus, " 26-36. Pontius Pilate, Desecration of the City of the Temple. 18-36. Joseph, surnamed Caiaphas, high priest. 34. Death of Philip. His territory becomes a Roman province. Rabban Gamaliel. 37. Agrippa I., king of Philip's territory. Birth of Flavius Josephus. 38-40. Persecution of the Jews in Alexandria. Philo. 39. Herod Antipas banished. Caligula determines to desecrate the Temple. 41-44. Agrippa I., king of the whole of Palestine. 44. Palestine a Roman province. Famine in Judæa. 44-46. Cuspius Fadus, governor. Theudas. 46-48. Tiberius Alexander, gov. 48. The Jews expelled from Rome. 48. Agrippa II., prince of Chalcis and overseer of the Temple. 48-52. Cumanus, governor. Repeated revolts of the Jews. 52-61. Claudius Felix, governor. Growing power of the Sicarii. Simon ben Gamaliel.

PEOPLES STANDING IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL.

B.C.

A.D.

14-37. Tiberius.

32. Avellius Flaccus, governor of Egypt.

36-39. Vitellius, governor of Syria. 37-41. Caius Caligula.

39. Petronius, governor of Syria.

41-54. Claudius.

47. The royal house of Adiabene converted to Judaism.

OTHER PEOPLES.

ISRAELITE LITERATURE.

B.C.

Ascension of Moses.

A.D.

9. Arminius defeats Varus in the German forests.

CHRISTIANITY.

33? John the Baptist.
 34-35? Public ministry of Jesus.
 35? (At the Passover.) Jesus crucified at Jerusalem.
 37? Persecution of the disciples (Stephen). Paul converted.

Susanna. Bel and the Dragon.
 III. Maccabees. Wisdom.

40? Paul at Jerusalem with Peter (Galatians i. 18).
 44? Death of James, the son of Zebedee.

Philo.

Between 40? and 51? Paul (and Barnabas) in Syria and Cilicia.

51? Conference at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 1-11). Dispute between Peter and Paul at Antioch (Gal. ii. 12 ff).
 52? Paul in Galatia. " Paul in Europe. Paul at Corinth.

ISRAEL.	PEOPLES STANDING IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL
A.D.	A.D.
60. Portius Festus, governor.	54-68. Nero.
62. Albinus, governor. Constant disturbances in Palestine.	64 (July). Conflagration of Rome. (August). Persecution of the Christians.
64. The Temple of Jerusalem completed by Agrippa II.	
64-66. Gessius Florus, governor.	
66. Revolt at Cæsarea and Jerusalem. Masada surprised. Cestius defeated. Many Christians retreat to Pella. Flavius Josephus, governor of Galilee.	
67. Galilee in the power of the Romans.	68. Galba, Otho, Vitellius.
68. Vespasian conquers Northern Judæa and Idumæa.	69-79. Vespasian.
70. Titus besieges and takes Jerusalem. Temple destroyed.	70. Titus enters Rome in triumph
73. Masada, the last refuge of the Zelots, taken. The Scribes retreat to Jamnia. Johanan ben Zacchai. Fall of the Temple at On. Gamaliel ben Simeon, patriarch of the Jews. The new Sanhedrim at Jamnia.	79-81. Titus.
81-96. Persecution of the Jews under Domitian.	81-96. Domitian. 96-98. Nerva.
116. Revolt of the Jews in Cyrene and Egypt.	98-117. Trajan.
132-135. Revolt under Barcochbah. Taking of Betar. Akibah ben Joseph.	117-138. Hadrian.
135. Jerusalem a Roman city. Scribes assemble at Lydda. The national existence of the Jews at an end.	138-161. Antoninus Pius.
	161-180. Marcus Aurelius.

CHRISTIANITY.

ISRAELITE LITERATURE

A.D.

54? *I. Thessalonians?*
 55-59? Paul at Ephesus and Corinth.
Galatians.
I. and II. Corinthians.
Romans.
 59? Paul goes to Jerusalem and is made prisoner.
 59-61? Paul at Cæsaræa.
 61-62? Paul's journey to Rome.
 62-64? Paul's imprisonment at Rome.
II. Timothy i. 1, 2, 15-18; iv. 9-18? *Philippians. Philemon.*
 64. Paul's death.
 62 or 69? James murdered.

68. *Revelation.*
 Before 70? Oldest portions of *Matthew* and *Mark*.

? *Hebrews. II. Thessalonians. Colossians.*

About 90? *James.* Gospels according to *Matthew* and *Mark*.
 Soon after 100. *I. Peter. Ephesians.* Gospel according to *Luke*. Soon followed by *Acts of Apostles*.

After 130? *II. Timothy. Titus. I. Timothy. Jude.*
 Before 150? Gospel according to *John. I. John. II. John. III. John.*
 After 150? *II. Peter. Epistle of Barnabas. Epistle of Clement.*
 170. Church history of Hegesippus.

A.D.

IV. Maccabees.
 Book of Jubilees.

After 70. Judith.
 Close of the Canon.

Before 79. Josephus's "Jewish War."

Apocalypse of Baruch. IV. Esdras. 98 or 94. Josephus's "Jewish Antiquities" and "Against Apion."

After 100. Josephus's "Life."

Mishna of Rabbi Akibah, Mechilta, Siphre, Siphra.

Near the end of the second century
 Rabbi Judah gives the Mishna its present form.

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